BETHANY COLLEGE

GALEN C. HARTMAN
LIBRARY FUND

LECTURES

ON THE

HISTORY OF LITERATURE,

ANCIENT AND MODERN,

BY

FREDERICK SCHLEGEL,

NOW FIRST COMPLETELY TRANSLATED.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1889.

1
447

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Dedication

TO HIS EXCELLENCY CLEMENS WENCESLAUS LOTHER

PRINCE METTERNICH,

HIS IMPERIAL AND APOSTOLIC MAJESTY'S PRIVY-CHANCELLOR,
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE, AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
&c. &c. &c.

I VENTURE to dedicate to your Excellency this course of Lectures on Literature, in their present improved form, with feelings of profound veneration. It were no slight gratification to know that the picture it gives of the intellectual features of the most remarkable European nations, possessed an interest in your eyes. I might then venture to hope that I had accomplished some portion at least of my design. For it has been my special wish to assist in filling up the great chasm which still severs the literary world and man's intellectual life from practical reality, and to exhibit the momentous influence of a nation's intellectual culture on the course of universal progress and the fate of Empires. If not merely the learned and the ordinary friends of literature, but those also who are called to direct this progress, were pleased to approve and take an interest in my representation, I should require no better proof that my attempt has not entirely failed. With this feeling, then, it is very flattering to me to have received your Excellency's permission to dedicate my present volume to you; and I derive additional pleasure from the opportunity thereby afforded me of recording those sentiments of respect and grateful homage which will never cease to be entertained for your Excellency by your most obedient humble servant,

Vienna, 1815. FREDERICK SCHLEGEL.

809
Sch37lY

63009

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/lecturesonhistor0000fred_w4o4

PREFACE.

THE works of the brothers Schlegel, as far as it is proposed to translate them for the Standard Library, are completed by the present volume, which comprises perhaps the most masterly, either of their joint or separate productions. Indeed it has been currently recognized in Germany as "a great national possession." The literary public will have become familiar with the substance of these celebrated Lectures, by the pleasing though rather free abridgment of them, attributed to the late Mr. Lockhart, which has gone through several editions both in England and America. The publisher had long entertained the intention of adding the work to his series, in a complete and unabridged form, but while there was a substitute of any kind in the market he saw no reason for haste. The time having at length arrived when it seemed to him that publication ought to be no longer delayed, he engaged for a translation with a gentleman whom, though untried, he believed to be perfectly competent. But when the first sheets came from the printer he found them so unsatisfactory that, after revising a considerable portion himself, he placed the remainder in the hands of one of his most careful coadjutors. There are therefore three translators concerned in the present volume, upon one of whom at least the public have been accustomed to rely.

It must be conceded that it is by no means an easy task to transfuse the rich and poetical style of Schlegel into its equivalent in English, but it is a rule with the publisher

never to have any thing omitted or slurred over on account of its difficulty. In the previous translation there are many omissions, including much of Schlegel's religious feeling, which, as he tells us in his preface (never before translated), is meant to be a distinguishing feature of his book—this, no doubt, is an injustice to the author.

It is a curious fact that neither the German original, in any of its numerous editions, nor the English or French translations, are accompanied by an Index, which in a History of Literature seems most especially required: in the present edition this deficiency is supplied.

Schlegel's work, on its first complete publication in Germany, was dedicated to that eminent statesman, *Prince Metternich*, then in the zenith of his distinguished career,—it is now on its first complete publication in England, after a lapse of forty-five years, again dedicated to him, while he is still happily in the full vigour of his mental capacity; and that, as the cycle of events has willed it, by the son of one who was his companion and schoolfellow threescore and ten years ago.

HENRY G. BOHN.

February, 1859.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1815.

TWENTY years have now elapsed since the appearance of my first efforts in reviewing the literature and genius of Greece. Although the youthful enthusiasm pervading those efforts could not completely realize the proposed aim in every direction, yet, upon the whole, the undertaking was not unfavourably received: having gradually met with indulgence, and even encouraging approval, at the hands of the ablest judges, owing probably to the sincerity of my endeavours.

After thus passing several years in seclusion devoted wholly to the study of *ancient* literature, I no sooner laid my first attempt before the public than I was stimulated by its success and the powerful excitement of the age, to direct my enquiries to *modern* literature: this was effected partly in conjunction with my brother A. W. Schlegel and partly alone, after my own method. But my system of thought differed so widely from prevalent standards that the undertaking, although not altogether without results, in reference to the very marked influence it exercised, was calculated to excite opposition and censure rather than to enlist friends.

Meanwhile, external effects could never long interrupt the progress of my private investigations, inasmuch as the satisfaction of my own literary curiosity at all times constituted the primary object of my pursuits, and was of more consequence in my eyes than mere literary renown. This yearning after knowledge naturally led me to Oriental languages and the less familiar domains of Indian literature, at a time of life generally considered too advanced to admit of the commencement of fresh studies. The first-fruits of these investigations were submitted to my contemporaries, some six years ago, in my Treatise on the Language and Philosophy of India.*

* Published in Schlegel's Aesthetic Works. Bohn, 1849, 3*s* 6*d*.

During all these varied literary occupations, Mediæval Art, and more especially old German poetry, language, and history, strongly attracted my attention and regard. Though commenced at an earlier period, this particular department of enquiry was chiefly pursued during the twelve years that have elapsed since 1802. Whatever, in its various branches, appeared to me especially remarkable, or not generally known, I have touched upon as occasion served: other materials are before me, and partly prepared, but not yet at sufficient maturity to be published.

Thus it has happened that my labours in the domains of literature, devoted chiefly to the history of poetic art and criticism, have remained fragmentary from their very manifold and diversified nature; and I have long entertained a wish to effect a systematic review of the whole. The lectures I delivered in the spring of 1812, before a numerous audience, afforded me the desired opportunity, since they were composed in a manner adapted to the general public and to the press. I venture at least to flatter myself that many of those who took an interest in my former literary exertions in individual branches may not be unwilling to accept this comprehensive summary; whilst there are some perhaps, to whom the present features of my plan may be interesting, though they found little attraction in the critical details of my former disquisitions.

An actual literary history, replete with quotations and biographical notices, must not be expected here. My only purpose has been to pourtray the genius of literature during every age, as a whole, and to trace the course of its development among the most important nations. Detailed critical enquiry on individual topics, such as I have frequently attempted in my other treatises, was not within the province of my present undertaking, which is restricted to a general survey. Yet the results of such enquiries will often be found briefly stated on occasions when those results appeared to be not only novel but even important in their general bearing. From the characteristics given of the most distinguished authors, it will be readily perceived that I have communed long and frequently with them. If at any time, with the object of illustration, a work inaccessible to my research, however unimportant, excepting as one of a series, has to be adduced, this fact will be duly indicated.

Should this Delineation of Literature embrace more of the History of Philosophy than might be expected from such a title, let this not be accounted as excrescent or accidental: since it fully accords with my peculiar conceptions of literature, insisted on throughout, that it is the comprehensive essence of the Intellectual Life of a Nation. It is hoped, therefore, that this superfluity, even if regarded as such, will not be deemed a fault.

FREDERICK SCHLEGEL.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

PAGE

Introduction and plan of the Work.—Influence of Literature on the mode of life and the moral dignity of Nations.—Poetry of the Greeks from the earliest ages to the days of Sophocles . . 1

LECTURE II.

Later Greek Literature.—Sophistry and Philosophy.—Alexandrinian Period 29

LECTURE III.

Review.—Influence of the Greeks over the Romans.—Sketch of Roman Literature 55

LECTURE IV.

Brief duration of Roman Literature.—New epoch under Hadrian.—Influence of Oriental thought over the Philosophy of the West.—Mosaic records, Hebrew poetry.—The Persian Religion.—Idea of the Bible, and characteristics of the Old Testament . . 76

LECTURE V.

Indian Monuments and Epics.—Ancient modes of Sepulture.—Indian Literature and Intellect 107

LECTURE VI.

Retrospect to Europe.—Influence of Christianity on the Language and Literature of Rome.—Characteristics of the New Testament.—The Nations of the North.—Gothic Epics.—Odin, Runic Writings, the Edda 133

PAGE.

LECTURE VII.

Teutonic Poetry.—The Middle Ages.—Origin of modern European Languages.—Mediæval Poetry —Love-Songs.—Influence of Norman Character on the Spirit of Chivalrous Poetry—more especially relating to Charlemagne 156

LECTURE VIII.

Third set of chivalrous Poems.—Arthur and the Round Table.—Influence of the Crusades and of the East on the Poetry of the West.—Arabic Song.—The Persian Epic of Ferdusi.—Last compilation of the Nibelungen-Lied.—Wolfram von Eschenbach.—Real import of Gothic Architecture.—Later chivalrous Poetry.—The Cid 177

LECTURE IX.

Italian Literature.—Mediæval Allegory.—Christianity and Poetry.—Dante, Petrarch, Boccacio.—General character of Italian Poetry.—Latin verse of modern times.—Injurious influence of the same.—Old Roman systems of polity.—Macchiavelli.—Important Discoveries of the fifteenth century 196

LECTURE X.

Literature of the Northern and Eastern Nations of Europe.—Scholastic Divinity and German Mysticism of the Middle Ages . 216

LECTURE XI.

General Remarks on Philosophy previous and subsequent to the Reformation —Poetry of Catholic Countries—Spain, Portugal, Italy.—Garcilaso, Ercilla, Camoens, Tasso, Guarini, Marino, Cervantes 236

LECTURE XII.

Romance.—Dramatic Poetry of Spain.—Spenser, Shakspere, Milton.—Age of Louis XIV.—French Tragedy . . . 258

LECTURE XIII.

Philosophy of the Seventeenth Century.—Bacon, Hugo Grotius, Descartes, Bossuet, Pascal.—Change in mode of Thought.—Spirit of the Eighteenth Century.—Sketch of French Atheism and Revolutionary Spirit 286

PAGE

LECTURE XIV.

Lighter Productions of the French, and imitation of the English.—Fashionable Literature in France and England.—Modern Romance.—Prose of Rousseau and Buffon.—Lamartine.—English popular Poetry.—Scott and Byron.—Modern Theatre of the Italians.—English Criticism and History.—Scepticism and moral belief.—Return to a purer and loftier Philosophy in France — Bonald and St. Martin, Lamennais and De Maistre.—Sir William Jones and Burke 30

LECTURE XV.

Retrospect —German Philosophy. — Spinoza and Leibnitz.—Language and Poetry of Germany during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries; Luther, Hans Sachs, Jacob Bœhmen.—Opitz and the Silesian School.—Degeneracy of Taste after the Peace of Westphalia: Occasional Poems —German Poets of the first half of the Eighteenth Cent ry.—Frederic II.—Klopstock: the Messiah and Northern Mythology.—Wieland's chivalrous Poetry. —Metrical quantity of the Ancients adapted to the German Language —Defence of Rhyme.—Adelung, Gottsched, and the so-called Golden Age —First Generation of Modern German Literature, or Period of the Founders 33

LECTURE XVI.

General Survey.—Epoch of Genial Literature.—Direction of Poetry to Nature and the Living Reality of the Present.—German Criticism.—Lessing and Herder: Prevalent Æsthetics.—Lessing as a Philosopher: Freedom of Thought and the Illuminati: the Emperor Joseph II.—Character of the third Generation: Philosophy of Kant.—Goethe and Schiller.—Future Prospects.—Fichte and Tieck.—Real Character of German Literature.—Comprehensive Idea of the Present Era 35

HISTORY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LITERATURE.

FIRST LECTURE.

INTRODUCTION AND PLAN OF THE WORK.—INFLUENCE OF LITERATURE ON THE MODE OF LIFE AND THE MORAL DIGNITY OF NATIONS.—POETRY OF THE GREEKS FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE DAYS OF SOPHOCLES.

In the following lectures I purpose to take a comprehensive survey of the development and spirit of literature among the principal nations of ancient as well as of modern times: and more especially to consider literature in reference to its influence on practical life, on the destiny of nations, and on the progress of ages.

The eighteenth century witnessed an important change in mental culture, especially in Germany, and one which cannot but be regarded as fortunate. Not that the individual efforts and achievements of art or science deserve indiscriminate praise, or were uniformly successful. But with respect to the extended relations of Literature, its closer sympathies with ordinary life, and the influence which it exercises, as well individually as on the nation, this change has proved no less beneficial than it was necessary.

The learned, as a class, were formerly altogether separated from the rest of the world, as entirely from the higher

ranks of society, as these were from the mass of the people. Keppler and Leibnitz wrote, for the most part, in Latin: Frederic the Second read, wrote, and thought only in French. The learned and the noble alike neglected their mother tongue. National recollections and feelings were abandoned to the guardianship of the people, among whom still lingered some remnants of the good old time, however feeble and mutilated; or they remained sacred to youthful enthusiasm and the daring speculations of a few poets and authors, who began to project a new order of things. Yet, so long as these efforts were individual, irregular, and wanting in combinative force, even youthful enthusiasm could not always claim the triumph of complete success, or produce unequivocal results.

The estrangement to which I have referred as existing between the learned, the fashionable, and the great body of the people, respectively, prevailed throughout the whole of Germany during the latter half of the seventeenth, and the early portion of the eighteenth, centuries: and, indeed, the natural consequences thereof may be said not to have terminated even then in individual instances, though, upon the whole, a marked difference—the lengthening shadow of an eventful future—was clearly observable. At length, the rapidly increasing number of distinguished productions, or at least laudable attempts, dating from the middle of the eighteenth century, drew attention to the innate riches of the German language. Universal admiration was now directed to the great, the good, and the beautiful, which had so long been suffered to lie dormant. Advantages inherent in the German idiom, such as its energy, flexibility, copiousness, began to be duly appreciated. These qualities had been concealed simply because the language had never before been treated in a congenial manner. And now, the more that patriotic reminiscences and affections were stirred up within the bosom of her sons, the more intense became the love of Germans for their mother-tongue. The acquisition of foreign languages, living or dead—an accomplishment so necessary to the learned—no longer involved neglect of their own: a neglect which invariably recoils on the head of the offender, and rarely, if ever, suggests a favourable opinion of his intellectual powers or attainments. The pains bestowed

on the acquisition of foreign languages now turned to good account in behalf of the mother-tongue. All foreign idioms, even living ones, must needs be studied more elaborately than the mother tongue. But this sharpened the linguistic faculty: the sense that had been rendered acute in practising foreign languages, now directed its operations to its own, as well in cultivating as criticising. A worthy rivalry ensued in well-directed efforts to add to the native excellence of the German—its strength and copiousness—the varied perfections of other languages both ancient and modern.

It is not my intention to confine my remarks to the literature of Germany: my enquiries, will, on the contrary, embrace that of all Europe. I may observe here that in other countries, equally with Germany, the eighteenth century inaugurated a return to the national genius, marked by features of corresponding import and similar nature. In illustration of this, I need only adduce the example of England. In England, too, prostrate as it was during the second half of the seventeenth century from the effects of the civil wars that raged under the Protectorate, national taste had run wild, had grown licentious, imitative, and exotic in character. The language itself was neglected, the grand old poets and writers were almost forgotten. No sooner had England recovered her political independence, by means of a successful revolution, than her literature flourished anew. All affectation of foreign tastes and manners was banished from the soil: the people turned to their great national poets with redoubled ardour. By dint of careful culture the language assumed correctness of form: master-spirits arose, ancient memorials were fondly cherished; to each relic of the past, however trifling, a significance hitherto unknown was attached; so that in process of time, Britons fell under the meritorious reproach of too exclusive a nationality.

The isolation of the learned, as a distinctive body, from the great mass of the people, is the most formidable obstacle in the way of national civilization. The various innate inclinations, nay the very conditions and circumstances of men should, to a certain extent, cooperate, if the productions of the mind are to be perfected or appreciated. For how, indeed, could any work be considered excellent, in which the fiery enthusiasm of youth is not blended with the mature

wisdom of age? Neither ought the tenderness of womanly feeling to be wanting, as a leading element, in influencing the tone and manner of mental productions if they would aspire to the domains of the beautiful—if the genius of a nation is to be purely developed and its nobility of character maintained. The products of the mind cannot really be said to have any other fertile soil, in which to take root, than those sentiments common to all noble-minded and God-seeking men, and, with these, the genuine patriotism and national reminiscences of a people whose accents they breathe and whose welfare they are intended to promote. The discovery seems at last to have been made that, for the purposes of mental culture, an union of the various faculties of man, a concentration of energy and discipline—too often dissevered—is absolutely necessary. The matured wisdom of the philosopher, the rapid survey and quick decision of the practical man, the earnest inspiration of the artist living solely for his art, and the refinement to be found only in the intercourse of social life, have actually come in contact, or, at least, stand not so utterly aloof from each other as formerly. Yet, whilst recent times have witnessed considerable improvement in the literature of several countries—in its increased nationality, higher development of mind, and closer affinity with the concerns of daily life,—difficulties before alluded to have not, as yet, been fully met. How often do we see literature and life completely alienated in this Germany of ours: like two distinct worlds having no interests, no sympathies in common; or only exerting an injurious influence by unsettling and perplexing on the one hand, obstructing and paralysing on the other. And thus the manifold variety essentially characteristic of the productions of the mind, comprehended in the general term—literature—is to a great extent lost to the world, or at least is very far from exercising that amount of beneficial influence either on individuals or the nation which it might and ought. Let us turn our attention briefly to the present condition of literature, and consider more especially the opinions generally entertained respecting the relations of the same to actual life. The Poet and the Artist are supposed to claim the peculiar prerogative of living in an ideal world of their own, as though this actual every-day world were unsuited to them;

and with regard to the man of learning it has long been an accepted maxim that he is of no practical utility. We mistrust the powers of the practised orator, apprehensive lest he should use them to bend the truth to his own purposes with the design of misleading us. Unhappily, experience and the history of our own times, teach us that philosophy not unfrequently misleads and involves in the most disastrous perplexity, whilst pretending to direct the footsteps of the pilgrim to the serene realms of truth. The very charges and grievances preferred by philosophers against each other have contributed to make their mutual disagreements notorious among the uninitiated. Hence it has been inferred, and generally received, that it is not in the nature of Philosophy to attain the object of her investigations with certainty, or to decide infallibly, however earnest may be her aim. It is not, however, in accordance with the principles of justice to seek to paralyze the loftiest effort of which the human mind is capable—the knowledge of truth – by associating it with some of the failures that must, more or less, attend on all fallible pursuits. It need not, indeed, create surprise if those who are constantly employed in the administration of state and weighty affairs should be tempted to view the squabbles of authors as a mere drama, neither very important nor attractive. To such an extent have the countless volumes issued from a teeming press satiated the great majority of the reading public, that the appearance of a new book has come to be generally considered as little more than a superfluous addition to the heap. I have tacitly admitted that authors, savans, poets, and artists, have themselves to blame for a considerable share of the disregard of literature, so prevalent in the world, though not always pointedly expressed; yet, it will, I think, be readily granted that such disregard is, on the whole, at variance with right feeling and equity. For even if the contemptuous remarks levelled at literary productions generally were really based on facts, were there no individual honourable exceptions, did no mental efforts of the philosophic writer tend to promote the good of the world in general, and of his own country in particular, even then, I take it, the censure would apply to the abuse rather than the practice of an art so momentous, so sublime. This depreciation is, moreover, prejudicial to the interests of litera-

ture, inasmuch as it is calculated to widen the breach between the inner, intellectual life, and the busy practical world, the schoolman and the statesman, so as, not unfrequently, to create active hostility and mutual oppression.

The importance of literature, in regard to the well-being and dignity of nations, cannot well admit of doubt: we will, therefore, proceed at once to a consideration of its essential nature, its train of varied consequences, and the magnitude of its general influence.

And, first, let us contemplate literature in its true nature, entire extent, and original purpose and importance. This term includes all that circle of the arts and sciences and all the faculties of representation which have life and man himself for their object, independently of outward act or material agency, working only through the instrumentality of thought and language, without any corporeal matter as a basis. Thereto, in the most especial manner, belongs poetry, and, next in degree, narrative, and descriptive history: then, reasoning and pure speculation, in so far as they influence the actions of human life: finally, wit and eloquence, provided they do not evaporate in the fleeting breath of words, but display themselves in the enduring form of written productions. But this, if rightly understood, includes nearly the whole of man's intellectual life. What is there more completely characteristic of man, or of greater importance to him than language? Reason alone excepted, and even she must perforce employ the vehicle of language in order to fulfil aright her functions, mankind could not have been endowed with a more precious boon than the voice, competent to intonate every changing shade of sentiment in song, adapted by easy flexibility to form all the subtle combinations and intricate articulations, which constitute the mechanism of language. But of all the discoveries the mind has made by its native energy, the art of writing is incomparably of the highest value. The Deity could not have presented man with a more glorious gift, than that of language, by the medium of which he is revealed to us, and which links the human race in one bond of common brotherhood. Reason and language, thought and word, are so essentially one, that, whilst on the one hand, we are accustomed to regard thought as the especial prerogative of man, we may, on the other,

connect speech, in essential significancy and import, with the original purposes of his creation. Since it is owing to the endowment of a soul, in whose depths the spirit fashions itself to the fructifying words of life, that man is likened unto his Creator, and in holy Scripture is called the image of the triune Creator.*

Though we must discriminate in terms of exact distinction between mental conception and verbal expression; yet it will only be necessary to insist on maintaining, in its full integrity, the line of demarcation in the event of want of harmony between the constituent elements. Originally one and the same, thought and word, ought not in their most diversified application, to be utterly severed, but rather reconciled and united as far as possible.

And how much soever these two important gifts, which in their nature indeed are simply one, the prerogative that may be said to define and distinguish man's essence—thought and speech—are liable to abuse and error: yet the instinctive consciousness of their intrinsic worth, is abundantly testified in the consequence we attach to them in exercising our ordinary judgment. It were a work of supererogation to direct attention to the influence of rhetoric upon the concerns of every-day life, or to shew that eloquence has no little sway in biassing our judgment in the course of our relations to each other and to the state. From the individual we easily pass to the general, and suffer our estimation of the character of nations to be affected by similar considerations; holding those in the highest repute for cultivation of intellect, who are wont to express their thoughts and wishes in a manner at once the most suitable, definite, and agreeable. And thus, from an intuitive preference of external form and expression, we are too often led unduly to postpone an examination of the mental characteristics and moral worth of those passing in review before us. Neither is this mode of criticism confined to individuals and groups in our immediate neighbourhood, since we insensibly accustom ourselves to the same criterion respecting those separated from us by a great extent of time and space. Let us take for example the case of a people who are styled by us Barbarians,

* This passage is altogether omitted in Mr. Lockhart's translation.

because we are unacquainted with their history and mode of life. The observant traveller has not long set foot upon their shores and become familiar with their language before he feels it necessary to exchange his former prejudices for a more favourable opinion. Barbarians they may be, he exclaims, and ignorant of our arts and refinements, and no less so of their injurious concomitants: but we cannot deny that they are endowed with a vigorous comprehension, and a marvellously natural acuteness. How striking are their repartees, how sententious and precise their phraseology. Thus everywhere we are compelled to form our opinions of intellect from language and expression, in all phases and under the most varied circumstances of life. These however are individual decisions in individual cases. We shall best discover the dignity and the importance of the arts and sciences represented in a spoken and a written form, if we trace their intimate connection with the moral worth and the destiny of nations in the long chapter of the world's history. The real character of literature, as the summary of a nation's intellectual capacity and progress, is then exhibited in its fullest extent.

One of the most important advantages to a nation, in regard to its further development and especially its intellectual condition, is seen to be, judging by historical and relative evidence, the possession of a store of national traditions; these as they become more and more faint in the long vista of ages, it is the especial business of poetry to commemorate with imperishable splendour. Such traditions, the most glorious heirloom of a country, are indeed a possession which nothing else can replace. And when the memory of great deeds of past ages, embodied in matchless strains of poetry, kindles the noblest feelings of a people and fires their bosoms with a glorious ardour, we too, who are called to pronounce upon their merits, are disposed to assign them a leading position in historic annals. Boundless aspiration, high emprise, notable events, do not alone suffice to ensure renown in the impartial judgment of posterity. Whole dynasties have, at the close of a turbulent and unsuccessful career, sunk into oblivion, and left scarce a trace behind them. Others more fortunate, have indeed, perpetuated the memory of their

conquests, but the memorials hardly command our serious attention, unless national genius has stamped such enterprises and successes, which are of but too frequent recurrence in history, with a lofty impress. Deeds of prowess and exalted situations cannot, of themselves, command our admiration or determine our judgment; a people that would rank high in our esteem must themselves be conscious of the importance of their own doings and fortunes. But history is the expression of this natural self consciousness. A people whose splendid triumphs and achievements live in the immortal pages of Livy, whose fading glory and latter degeneracy are displayed by the pen of a Tacitus, claim a foremost rank in the annals of fame; we should be doing violence to our sense of justice by associating them with the numerous hordes, whose history may be summed up by saying that they came on the stage as freebooters, and as such were driven from it. Of poets and artists, gifted with the power and magic of representation, who have ventured on the highest flights of fancy, and of philosophers skilled in penetrating the hidden depths of thought, the number must ever be small; and these can directly influence but very few in their own generation. But the sphere of their influence extends with the progress of ages, and their worth shines brighter and broader; while on the other hand, even the lustre of the legislator's name, seen through altered conditions of society, glimmers dimly—and the fame of the conqueror, after a lapse of centuries, however great and all-absorbing may once have been the theme of his achievements, gradually fades, till it becomes a mere speck in history. It may be safely affirmed that Homer and Plato have contributed, not only in our own times, but even in hoary antiquity, in, at least as great a degree, to elevate and extend the fame of Greece, as Solon and Alexander. The poet and the philosopher may unquestionably claim a greater share of the homage paid by the rest of civilized Europe to Greece, the cradle of European civilization, than the legislator or the conqueror; the very influence exerted by their genius and works on posterity and on the improvement of the human race exceeds both in extent and duration all the effects which laws and victories have ever produced. Nay,

the fact that Solon and Alexander are yet household words among us is more attributable to the operation of their genius upon intellectual culture, than to those civil institutions which are now so foreign to our notions, or to kingdoms carved out by the sword, which have long vanished from the scene. Inasmuch as poets and philosophers of the highest eminence are rare phenomena in the history of the world, their appearance is deservedly regarded as unerringly indicating the mental elevation of the people to which they belong. To these lofty characteristics of national poesy and traditionary lore—history suggestive of incident and purpose—art in the perfection of refinement,—let us add the gifts of eloquence, wit and a cultivated language adapted to the purposes of polished society — assuming that these be not prostituted to corrupt purposes—and we shall then have a complete picture of a really refined and intellectual people, and at the same time a just conception of a national literature.

Desirous as I am of delineating literature in its fullest extent and according to its influence on social life, I am but too well aware of the difficulties with which my undertaking is beset. On the one hand being anxious to present the whole of my subject in a synoptical form, I shall, occasionally, be compelled to touch lightly on matters entitled to a more detailed disquisition; on the other, it will be my duty, in the historical prosecution of my plan, now and then to allude to topics which may seem unimportant to any but the devoted literary student. I am however animated and cheered in the hope of successfully executing my task by the conviction that an intimate connexion, of many years standing, with some of the most various and important minutiæ of letters, has at any rate created within me a certain fitness. The domains of literature are indeed so spacious that few who know their extent will claim to have traversed them all. The elaborate nature of my researches in many of its choicest fields, extending over a considerable portion of my life, may, not unreasonably, induce me to think that I have at last arrived at a somewhat complete and regular digest of the whole subject: it certainly enables me to form a more mature judgment of what is merely preparatory, and what actually

arrives at a result, and enables me to discriminate between hat which is valuable only to the philosopher, and that which possesses intrinsic merit, worthy of the attention and admiration of the world.

Our mental culture is so thoroughly founded on the system of the Ancients, that it is next to impossible to treat of literature without mention of the Greeks and Romans, by way of introduction and as a fair starting-point. I, at least, should find it difficult to sketch my views of letters generally, and more especially of modern times, did I not take a previous glance at the salient features of the literary history of past ages. For all purposes of comparison the example of the Greeks displays the ennobling influence of a happily developed literature in the most emphatic manner; whilst the fatal effects of eloquence degraded into sophistry are nowhere else so obviously apparent. This prefatory survey will be made in the most succinct manner possible. In the first place I purpose considering the collective literature of Greece and Rome generally—those two nations to whom, jointly, we owe the rich inheritance of our intellectual culture. In terms equally brief I shall then proceed to enquire to what extent in Greek and Roman times, as well as later, Europe stood indebted to Oriental nations in reference to the advancement of the human mind. It will be said that the older monuments of Asiatic genius ought chronologically to precede; but as my primary object is to present a picture of *European* culture, and especially to point to the influence of literature on life, it will be more convenient to adduce Oriental modes of thought and systems of philosophy in such a form as shall serve to illustrate its effects on the habits of the European mind. Attention will then also be directed to our own primeval history, our northern mythology, with the poetry of the feudal ages thence derived, a period in which—during the Crusades—Europe once more came into fruitful contact with the East. The subsequent pages will be devoted to times dating from the revival of the arts and sciences, and to a comprehensive review of the literature of the eighteenth century. And if in the course of the following enquiries I should, occasionally, succeed in presenting

the familiar topics of classical literature under a new aspect or some interesting connexion, I trust I may the more readily find indulgence whenever in speaking of modern times I may see fit to advance principles of criticism not in accordance with the received standard of our own day.

Of the many inducements, which invite the critic to inaugurate the history of literature with a sketch of Grecian genius, by no means the least cogent is the consideration that the mental culture of the Greeks was pre-eminently self-developed and almost wholly independent of the refinement of other countries. This cannot be asserted of the Romans or any of the later European nations. The Greeks, it is true, derived their letters from the Phœnicians, according to their own testimony, whilst they copied the elements of architecture and the mathematics, certain philosophic ideas, and many of the arts of life, from Egypt or other Asiatic nations. Their earlier legends and poesy are in many instances imbued with the spirit of the oldest traditions of Asia. But these are mere scattered fragments and half-obliterated traces, such as may be found anywhere, pointing to the common origin of the human family and the dawn of mental effort. All that the Greeks ever learned or borrowed they immediately, with the assistance of home-materials, applied themselves to re-casting and adapting. Besides, they were unconnected links, crude conceptions: the great entirety of their mental discipline is of their own formation. The Romans, on the contrary, as well as the modern nations of Europe, received a literature and an intellectual system ready moulded—a complete bequest—from other, older nations; the Romans from the Greeks, the moderns from them both and from the East; which having, with more or less of energy and skill, framed to suit their own exigencies, they appropriated bodily.

Here and there, as has been remarked, the veins of Asiatic tradition might be seen in the structure of the Grecian system, though they were more numerous and more intimately connected with the trunk than a mere cursory glance revealed. The Greeks themselves were all but unconscious of this their Eastern relationship. If at any time they

chanced to come upon a solitary clue to their earliest home and origin, they were lost in amazement at the novelty: or, with characteristic vivacity, they became entangled in labyrinthine mazes of speculation. In a vain search for further traces of this flickering light they lost the beautiful harmony, the charming simplicity of Hellenic life and sentiment. Their acquaintance with the East was of far too limited a kind to admit of their penetrating to the actual point at which the history of mankind commences: they were unable to discover the great source from which all human effort sprung, or to trace the many winding ramifications in the pedigree of human life. It has been reserved for us, by means of an accession of knowledge of both countries and idioms, to reconcile Grecian art and legend with their Asiatic origin: and without sacrificing that beautiful simplicity which is the characteristic of Grecian culture.

And here it may be proper to make the following remarks concerning the earliest ages of the Greeks. On the dispersion of the primitive stock of mankind through their arrogance and internal dissensions, the scattered branches that appear in the most ancient histories as so many isolated nations, continued to assume those distinctions of caste and station which, previous to their dispersion, had formed constituent elements in the most remote ages of social union. Thus the Egyptians were essentially a sacerdotal people, although other classes, divided into castes, existed among them: simply because every thing emanated from the priestly office, and the influence of the priestly character greatly preponderated. This is likewise the case with the Indians; whilst, under different circumstances, the Hebrews, too, present a picture of perfect theocracy: I need scarcely call attention to like institutions of a sacerdotal character prevalent among the Etruscans in the West. Even in the earlier stages of Roman history, the Etruscan ground-work of a sacerdotal government will not fail to strike the observer, only that here affairs took a different turn, owing to the concentration of sacerdotal, judicial, and military power in the hands of the patricians. Other nations issuing from the same scattered family group, who subsequently attained to extensive dominion and powerful sway, are to be charac-

terized as warrior people, in reference to the predominance of the martial element and the aristocracy of caste. Under this head, the Medes and Persians claim the foremost place, and, next in degree the Germanic tribes, who, though appearing late on the scene of action, faithfully retained the original type. In the next rank to these come the Greeks, or, at least, they incline, upon the whole, to this division. They present themselves, however, in a mixed character, having at first adhered to the sacerdotal, and then exchanged it for the military form of government—alternating between the two, so as to give rise to the supposition that they were originally descended from both these elements. The heroic age of the Greeks was doubtless preceded by times of priestly administration: and in this, as a general conclusion, all reliable mythologists and historians agree, even when differing as to particulars. By common consent we may pronounce the serious Pelasgians to have been the predecessors of the light-hearted Hellenes. It is just possible that the Pelasgians, as their name seems to indicate,* were only the elder branches of the same or a kindred group: but their entire mode of life, as well as all the arrangements of Hellenic society, then resembled in a much greater degree the Egyptian or even the Etruscan sacerdotal forms, than they did in the later heroic age of Homer.

The allegorical doctrines inculcated by the priesthood of this ancient Pelasgian period were embodied in the mysteries of a later age, and celebrated in the numbers of a peculiar order of bards. Tradition partakes somewhat of the significancy of History, when in commemorating the cycle of the elder poets, long antecedent to the heroic Trojan legends and the Homeric poems, it commences with Orpheus, who was not of Hellenic descent, but belongs exclusively to the sacerdotal era and symbolical mythology. It is curious to note how soon the strict bonds of Pelasgian priesthood were completely shaken off by the warlike and merry-hearted throng

* Πελασγοι may have been an older, irregular form of παλαιοι: but even in its most natural derivation from πελας, as compared with πελαστης and πελατης, the term seems purely to imply the earliest settlers in the territory.

of Hellenic heroes; whilst the rule of the great hero-families at a subsequent period of flourishing commerce, when mighty cities studded the maritime homes of the Greeks, was largely curtailed of its dimensions, until, at last, it came to live in the bright reminiscences of minstrelsy rather than in any vestiges of a political reality. These changes were of the utmost importance to the whole development of Grecian art. Since this very emancipation from the thraldom of Oriental priestcraft, this freedom from the all-absorbing influence of Roman polity, imparted to the artistic, poetic and philosophic genius of Greece, indeed spread through her whole literature, that spirit which formed its proudest boast. Equally independent of the state and of the hierarchy, for the first time in historic annals, the Schools are seen to step forth, in all their manifold ramifications and gradations, as a distinct and united power, such as has hardly been equalled at any subsequent period.

If we turn from this remote and, comparatively, obscure period, to times when Grecian renown had become universal, we find three principal events filling up the pages of her history, and constituting an epoch in her intellectual progress. They are, first, the Persian war, when united Greece hurled back the countless hordes of Asia that threatened her independent existence. Then, the war of Peloponnesus, that dreadful civil struggle maintained through twenty-seven long years between Athens and the Dorian tribes, and in which the political power of Greece was self-destroyed. And, last, the victories of Alexander, whereby the activity and genius of the Greeks were scattered over a great part of Asia, the prolific seed-corn of the future. In very truth, it fertilized the soil: causing many useful fruits, with, here and there, a noxious weed, to spring up: resulting in a novel Græco-Asiatic product, a medium of connexion between Asia and Europe, the influence of which has been sensibly felt down to our own day.

Had the Greeks been unsuccessful in the first defence of their liberties against the arms of Persia, had Greece been annexed, as a conquered province, to the empire of the *great king*, they would have occupied a very different position in the history of the human mind from that which

they now fill. At best, they would have remained on the self-same step of cultivation on which the Persians found them; they would, most probably, have sunk lower in the scale, and, gradually, have lost many of the characteristics of a civilized community. They would always have continued to be a sprightly, animated people, possessed of a fair amount of polished intelligence. Like other cultivated nations subdued by the Persian sword and incorporated into the empire of their conquerors, as, for instance, the Egyptians, Hebrews, Phœnicians, they would have been permitted to retain their language and writers, and, partially, their manners and customs; for the Persian rule save in a few exceptional instances, was, on the whole, mild, and perhaps the most generous of all the great empires. But the soaring flights of art and genius to which Greece attained after the successful issue of her glorious conflicts would never have been achieved had she lost her freedom.

The brilliant days of Greece, the most flourishing period of her mental development, may be comprised within the limits of about three centuries—from Solon to Alexander.

With Solon, then commences an entirely new epoch, even in the literature of Greece. Not only does the perfect development of lyric and the dawn of dramatic poetry fall within this period; but a number of didactic poets began to shew signs of awakened energy. The gnomic collections of Theognis and even of Solon present us with ingenious sayings graphically descriptive of social usages: aphorisms congenial to the tastes of most nations at a like stage of culture: being metrically framed, as best suited to the character of gnomic composition. Somewhere about the same period arose Thales, the founder of Grecian philosophy, and prose threw off the iron fetters of a rigorous poetic form. Prose writing first developed itself among the older Ionic philosophers of his school, in simple sentences containing ideas acutely and sometimes allegorically expressed: in aphorisms or views of nature, lucid but deep drawn, such as we yet possess sketched by the father of therapeutic art. The intellectual freedom which Solon promoted and rendered enduring, as well as the general diffusion of public education—a measure also originating in him—among the higher classes of

her citizens, greatly contributed to elevate Athens to the lofty distinction she enjoyed in the sequel—that of becoming the focus from which all Grecian culture radiated.

The reign of Alexander terminated this brilliant epoch. Demosthenes, who died only one year later than the conqueror, did not survive the extinction of his country's greatness. He was the last great writer of the Greeks who influenced them as a nation. They, indeed, continued to be a polished, intellectual people. In philosophy and learning they made probably greater advances under the Ptolemies in Egypt than in the beautiful land of their forefathers. But their national character was obliterated, and with their freedom they lost alike their inventive power and mental elevation.

Within so brief a period is comprised that marvellous affluence of mental creations and achievements, which down to our own times has made this people the object of universal admiration! A great and ever memorable spectacle, unspeakably fruitful in good and in bad results, therefore doubly instructive. Only one other example does the history of the world afford of a prolific development of awakened genius under circumstances somewhat similar. It will be considered in the sequel.

With Solon commences the actual epoch of the literature of the Greeks. Before his time they possessed only so much as is common to all happily organized nations in the twilight of social culture. Legendary tradition in lieu of regular history: songs and poems orally current, and serving instead of written books; martial songs intended to arouse patriotic ardour, festive chants hymning the praises of the gods, lays of rapturous joy and love, the anger of the bard, the plaints of the lovelorn swain, all these the Greeks possessed from the remotest times and in the greatest variety. But of more importance than the outbursts of the minstrel's passion are those narrative songs comprising popular traditions: such as the memories of a fabulous past, tales heroic and mythological, descriptions of the origin of a particular lineage, or of the creation of the world. With these, too, the Greeks, in common with many other nations, were abundantly supplied. There is one work, however,—the Homeric poems—that towers high above all others in Grecian

antiquity, which still are, and ever will be the objects of in exhaustible admiration.

The diction, the subject, and the spirit of those poems alike reveal their date, and fix it antecedent to Solon by some centuries: but in his time they were first collected, and partly through his instrumentality they were rescued from the insecure fate of oral transmission, carefully digested, and arranged in their present order.

In doing this, Solon and his successors in Athenian administration, Pisistratus and the Pisistratidæ, in addition to a natural fondness for the poems themselves, were, doubtless, actuated by other patriotic motives. So early as this period, six hundred years before the Christian era, the independence of Greece began to be menaced in Asia Minor: not, indeed, by the Persians, but by the sovereigns of Lydia, whose dominions, not long after, succumbed to Persian power. When the victorious steps of Cyrus advanced further and further into Asia Minor, on the defeat of Crœsus, no patriot of penetrating sagacity could long conceal from himself the peril impending over Greece.

In many other states the inhabitants would seem to have been wrapt in fancied security, fatally unconscious of the gathering storm that, under Darius and Xerxes, was to burst in terrible fury upon the soil of Greece. Athens, however, could not fail to have felt early misgivings, connected, as she was, with the Asiatic Greeks, both by old family ties and the interests of commerce. The revival of olden songs and memories reminding the people how, of yore, Grecian heroes, leagued together to avenge an insult, had in fierce conflict wrested Troy from Asiatic hands, was opportunely fitted to arouse the national feeling, and animate the country for the approaching struggle. No well-authenticated record of such an event as the Trojan war has come down to us. The dynasty of Agamemnon and of the Atridæ is, for the most part, historical. It is by no means improbable that occasional intercourse was maintained between the peninsula and Asia Minor: we know that Pelops—from whom the peninsula derived its name—the ancestor of the Atridæ, came from thence. Again, that the abduction of a princess was likely to result in a long and sanguinary warfare is quite in accordance with the general spirit and manners of the heroic age, resembling,

in many particulars, the heroic times of Christianity, and the chivalry of the feudal ages. How much soever of the fabulous and the allegorical was interwoven with legends relative to Helen, thus much is certain, that important memorials of the olden time were associated with the vicinity of Troy, as is proved by large mounds of earth thrown up in that locality, and which were commonly reported to have constituted the last resting-place of departed heroes. That these Greek tumuli—assigned by tradition to Achilles and Patroclus, at the sight of which Alexander wept, envying Achilles for having found a Homer to immortalize his name—existed in the poet's time, appears from several passages in the Iliad. It was reserved for the curiosity or the wantonness of our own day to desecrate these graves and, disturbing the repose of the mighty dead, to scatter abroad their ashes and other relics with careless hands. But even if the Trojan war was purely a myth, begotten of the minstrel's wayward fancy, the purposes of Solon and Pisistratus in reviving these poems were still sufficiently served, since the events they celebrate were universally credited as being of historic origin.

The relish with which the ancient Greeks appreciated the Homeric poems was materially enhanced by patriotic associations, whilst we are interested in them chiefly as vivid and beautiful representations of heroic life. They are free from the charge of narrow views, or adulatory panegyrics exclusively bestowed on a particular lineage—a charge such as may be justly preferred against the old songs of Arabia, or those of Ossian. Breathing the spirit of purest freedom, their representations of the phenomena of nature and of the varieties of human character, evince a sensibility pure and universal. A whole world opens out before us as we read them, a world of living and moving imagery. The two prominent figures, Achilles and Ulysses, seem to start from the canvass into warm life; yet they are but characters and ideas so general as to be found repeated in nearly all Greek hero legends; though never again sketched with so masterly a hand, or so exquisitely finished. Achilles, a hero destined to exhaust all the delights of mortality whilst still in the bloom and pride of youthful vigour, doomed moreover to be cut off by tragic fate in the prime of his days, is the

loftier conception of the two: an echo of this chord may be found in the character of many a hero in the legends of various lands; next in beauty to the Grecian, perhaps, those of our own northern clime. The legendary traditions of heroic times, among the sprightliest nations, are overshadowed by elegiac sensibilities, plaints full of tenderness, and sometimes shrouded in sombre grief. As if the transition from an age of glorious freedom and heroism had impressed succeeding generations with a feeling of dreary confinement, or the bard would transfer to the fictions of those times exclusively, reminiscences of some pristine state of bliss, deep-seated in the bosom of the whole human family. A less magnificent, but still richly-attractive form of poetic heroism is presented in the person of Ulysses, the roving, travelled hero, discreet, and experienced as brave, fitted to undergo danger and encounter adventures of every sort. Ample scope is thus afforded for pourtraying, in easy flowing style, the rare sights and products of foreign lands. In energy and pathos, the epics of the north, in brilliant colouring, those of the east, as far as our acquaintance extends, may compare with, if they do not surpass the Homeric poems. But the peculiar distinction of the latter is the amount of living truth and clearness blended in harmonious unison with an almost infantile simplicity and affluent fancy. The narrative, whilst entering into minute detail with all the garrulousness of age, never grows tiresome, owing to the extreme freshness and grace of imagery ever and anon dexterously shifted. Character, passion, and dialogue are unfolded with dramatic skill, and individual circumstances described with almost historical fidelity. From this last quality, which completely distinguishes Homer from all other —even Grecian—bards, he possibly derives his name. Homeros signifies a surety or witness: and on account of his truthful accuracy, as a minstrel of the heroic time, he richly deserves this appellation. To us he is, indeed, *Homeros*, a surety as well as a witness of the epic ages in their genuine state. As for the other meaning, relative to his blindness, also involved in the word, it is clearly conjectural, forming part of a tissue of inventions respecting the life of one wholly unknown to us in his person, and it is undeserving of a moment's consideration. Without the direct testimony of

Milton it would be sufficiently apparent from internal evidence in his poems, that he saw only with the eye of the spirit, and tasted not the exhilarating joyousness of sunlight. A melancholy haze broods over the page of Ossian, and it may reasonably be inferred that the gloom of night shaded the minstrel's brow. But whoever would ascribe the composition of the Iliad and Odyssey, the most lucid and transparent of all the poems of antiquity, to a blind bard must, before pronouncing such a verdict, determine to shut his own eyes to every kind of proof and argument.

In whatever century the Homeric poems originated, they transport us into times when the heroic element was fast approaching dissolution, or had just expired. Two worlds appear to meet in them: the wondrous past, which seemed to be never very far removed from the poet's gaze, whilst occasionally it stood vividly before him; and the present breathing world, in the midst of which he lived and moved. This blending of the present and past, by means of which the one was beautified, the other rendered more intensely real, endows those poems with charms peculiarly their own.

At first kings and heroic races held sway throughout all Greece. It is still so in the Homeric world. Soon after, regal dignity was nearly everywhere abolished: each city of any importance, each independent group, became a republic. On the establishment of this new political system, the various relations of life gradually grew more prosaic in character. Legends dealing with the older heroic time naturally became more and more foreign to the tastes of successive generations, and, doubtless, it was in a great measure owing to the changes in civil polity, that Homer fell into a temporary oblivion, from which Solon and Pisistratus eventually rescued him.

On comparing Homer's works with Indian, Persian, or northern, old-German heroic and mythological songs, there are two properties which serve as emphatic distinctions of the former. First, the harmonious evenness of a serene contemplation of life, as also of representation generally, which, together with remarkable clear-sightedness, are characteristic features of Greek intellect. And then, the rich dramatic development of individual circumstances and objects depicted in these poems, in connection with a skilfully interwoven

series of choice episodes. This, again, while it is not a necessary ingredient in the structure of epic poesy, is a faculty inherent in the spirit of Grecian art. Intimately allied with these qualities is the decided prominence of the rhetorical element, one in which the innate skill of the Greeks was peculiarly fitted to shine. Marked by idiomatic traits delightfully reflected from life's own mirror, and affording a prospective vista of the dawn of young republicanism, this rhetoric is totally unlike the meretricious ornaments of later poetry. These features, in various degrees of difference, serve to identify Homer in contradistinction to all other Rhapsodists of the Ionic school, and the whole body of Greek epic poets,—of whom Hesiod may be cited as an exemplar,—and confer on him an individuality easily recognized: though, in many particulars of epic treatment, the lesser heroic and mythological bards resemble both each other and Homer. A chaotic legendary confusion, often of gigantic proportions, is treated of by Hesiod in a style which the ancients termed *moderate:* inasmuch as it never assumed the form of wild and savage strength, or soared into empyrean heights of fancy. The Homeric fulness of dramatic development is wanting: but, regarded simply as a delineation of manners, there may be found in Hesiod's works abundant traces of a growing republican spirit destined altogether to supplant the old heroic life.

The Homeric poems, of such important and direct consequence to the literature of Greece, and, later, of Europe, generally, and so completely the fountain head of the collective mental culture of antiquity, seemed to me to demand especial historic consideration. It was, besides, my aim chiefly to direct attention to inventors, or to the ages when art first reached perfection: whole centuries of imitation or mere development will receive but cursory notice. Thus, I shall pass over the interval that ensued before the Persian war, since it is marked only by feeble imitators of Homer, or the budding of new forms of art which did not burst into flower till long after: of most of the writers we possess mere fragmentary remains. The Lyric art, especially, developed itself in the most varied forms. The poetry of the Greeks issued from the vast ocean of heroic and mythical legends as its source and fountain head, and now this sea

of ancient myths spread itself abroad in innumerable streams, greater and smaller, of songs and poems, till it assumed the form of dramatic representation, and especially of Tragedy, the solemn image of the noblest life, the summit and highest aim of art—designed to give us not only a truthful but a fascinating and impressive image of the Divine; for as in all poetry these elements or stages, of the mythical, the lyric, and the dramatic, are to be found, though not in the same order, on their difference is founded the nature of the three different kinds of poetry—or the epic, lyric, and dramatic art.

The Persian war, that memorable epoch in Grecian annals, was distinguished in literature by several great poets and writers whose works are still extant. Pindar, esteemed by his countrymen the loftiest of their minstrels, survived it, and during it he suffered the reproach of want of patriotism, and of a leaning to the Persians. Æschylus, the oldest of the great tragedians, himself a soldier, had fought with distinction in some of its glorious battles. Herodotus, somewhat younger, was born a few years prior to the tremendous expedition of Xerxes: when he read those books of his history which more especially commemorate the war of freedom, before the assembled Greeks, the mighty achievements of their valour were still fresh in the memory of the rejoicing victors. The odium under which Pindar lay is easily explicable, for his poems contain manifest indications of his dislike of democracy,—which had at that time caused many outbursts of popular violence in Greece, and was likely to lead to still graver disruptions,—and of his preference for monarchy, and the Dorian preponderance of aristocracy. But this constitutional form—monarchy and aristocracy—was nowhere in antiquity exhibited with so mild a lustre as in the Persian empire, the spirit of which, notwithstanding individual abuse of power, tended, on the whole, to promote noble and dignified views and practices.

The works of Pindar are the more valuable since they make up for the loss of many other Doric compositions. That which we are accustomed to call by the general name of Greek literature, that is to say, the extant productions of the great writers, is confined to those of Ionia and Athens, and, at a later period, of Alexandria. But, at the same time

that poetry, history, and philosophy flourished in the states of Ionia and Athens, the Dorians, a branch differing materially from the Ionic stock in manners, in language, as well as in thought, were in possession of an original and distinct literature: poets of every kind, a peculiar dramatic form, and, subsequently to Pythagoras, philosophic and other writers. Now that all these memorials have perished, we have in Pindar at least a general picture of Doric customs fresh from the poet's own conceptions.

The artificial enthusiasm, and the affected obscurity which his imitators chose to style *Pindaric*, are absolutely foreign to that great poet. On the contrary, placid dignity and cheerful serenity are characteristic traits of his genius. If there be any obscurity at all it is relative, being, probably, an allusion to some person or thing not known to us now, but perfectly intelligible to his contemporaries. Whilst hymning the praises of the victor in the Olympian games, he proceeds to celebrate the heroic line from which he is sprung, the city that gave him birth, or the gods in whose honour the games were instituted: this, as will easily be seen, is, occasionally, productive of violent transitions. Festive songs like these cannot, on the whole, be strictly termed lyrical, at least they are not so in the sense we usually attach to that word. They are heroic or epic poems for the occasion, which, accompanied by music and the dance, were not simply sung, but enacted. Pindar's great characteristic is the rare beauty and melodious softness of his language, as also the disposition to regard all objects from the most graceful point of view. How, in times of security, noble rulers of prosperous states, amid games of skill and chivalry, passed their days unclouded by a care in the happy society of congenial friends and inspired minstrels, and revelled in the reminiscences of a glorious ancestry: all this the poet sings in matchless verse. Tuneful numbers, equally charming with those in which victors and Doric nobles are represented, record the glories of the remotest times, and of the gods themselves.

Æschylus is a poet of a very different kind, and animated by feelings altogether dissimilar. The warlike spirit of the soldier, inspired by Liberty herself, which breathes through his works is, probably, a reflection of the sentiment prevalent

in haughty Athens during the great struggle. As a creative poet he had still to contend with a form that was only beginning to be moulded: that great Tragic form, peculiar to the Greeks, which Æschylus was the first to conceive and cast without being enabled to perfect it. He excelled in delineating the terrible and tragic passions. With the depth of the poet, he combined the severe earnestness of the profound thinker. To this last term he had, indeed, the justest claims: the very charge that has been brought against him of betraying the mysteries or secret doctrines of the Eleusinian society, in his poems, proves his anxious longings after truth. From his genius Greek mythology took a configuration altogether new. He does not only represent isolated tragic events—one uniformly tragic view of life, generally, pervades his whole works. The downfall of the older gods and Titans, and how their lofty lineage was displaced by a younger, more cunning, and less worthy race, is the oft-repeated story of his plaints: the original elevation and grandeur of nature and of man degenerating, in process of time, into imbecility and meanness. Yet, here and there, as in his Prometheus, he depicts giant strength rising superior to decay from amidst the crumbling fabric of a tottering world. There is in this a more than poetical sublimity.

In the two poets last under consideration, Pindar and Æschylus, a peculiarly oriental element is manifest, both in the bolder nature of their imagery, and their more abrupt turns of thought—but this element lies deeper than the mere external form or expression. Over the festive songs of Pindar, together with an Asiatic delicacy and gentleness, there is shed the lustre of a priestly dignity, a hallowed fragrance, as it were, harmoniously blending with the feelings of a natural piety, and a divine simplicity. Throughout the whole of Æschylus, gigantic rugged forms of hoary antiquity tower in massive outline. As Pindar may be said to live wholly in harmony, so Æschylus stands in perpetual conflict between ancient Chaos and the idea of Law and Harmony: on this very account, the first of really Tragic poets is of such significant import to the consideration of the whole of Grecian poetry. On rightly comprehending all the aspirations and ruling ideas it embodies, we shall find the older form of poesy placed midway between

the savage innate strength and depth of original paganism, and the later rational progress of civilization: between the first and second ages of the world, forcibly indicating a period of transition from the one to the other. Divided between Titanic power of will, the element of primeval times, with the recollections of which fancy was yet stored—and the idea of law and order, as the principle of harmonious feeling. This discordance of the ancient world is most distinctly visible in Æschylus. Next to the desire after harmony, to which I have alluded, the memories of a Titanic past, flowing from traditionary song, occupy the foremost place in ancient poesy: whilst the modern, Christian poet, having no actual source of legendary inspiration, fixes his gaze on the future rather than the past, as far as it can be attained by a presentiment of the Divine in symbolical representations.

Herodotus, who has left us a record of the Persian war is called the father of history. His work may be styled a faithful and detailed chronicle of all events which stood in immediate relation to the narrator and were of importance to himself: in the course of it, he takes occasion to insert all he knows of the world and its history; or a journal of travels, since he is fond of relating, by way of episode, whatever he saw in foreign countries more than other Greeks, and his powers of observation were both keen and circumstantial. On account of the number of his episodes and the free, poetical treatment of his subject, his work has been compared with the old hero-epics. But fidelity, clearness, and simplicity, together with artless grace of narrative, are just the qualities calculated to render descriptive history complete, and which would be considered necessary, nay indispensable, if they were not so rare. He is the Homer of history, the Homer of prose, the fullest and most copious of all mythologists, and sets clearly before our view the whole epic of ancient ethnography—as far as that science was known to the Greeks of the period—by means of nine rhapsodies in which is interwoven a rich collection of charming episodes. The prose narrative of mythographers, as a whole, still rang with the tone and manner of the *Epos*, and in Herodotus, its great master, from the grace and fulness which characterize it, the Homeric origin of the epic form of history is most clearly seen. By slow and difficult process the prose of the

Greeks disengaged itself from the poetic root, until it, at last, assumed a shape of its own. Even in philosophy, some writers after Xenophanes turned aside from pristine Ionic prose couched in aphorisms, to a metrical vehicle of thought: as in those didactic poems treating of the nature of things, the contents of which are strangely opposed to the essence of poetry, and can only borrow her garb for the purposes of external adornment.

With these three great authors whom I have noticed, others of no less dignity are linked at a later date. The first of these is Sophocles. In moral, as in physical nature there is a period of bloom, a culminating point of ripe perfection, which reveals itself in completeness of form and diction. Of this point Sophocles is the fullest representative, nor in tragic art alone but in the whole of Greek poetry and intellectual progress. In him there is an additional grace to that which we remark in other great poets and writers, and which constitutes them models of art, of form, or of style. The exquisite beauty of his compositions mirrors the inner harmony and beauty of his soul. It is clearly evident from many passages in ancient poets that they had no proper knowledge or correct ideas of God. But though they were destitute of this knowledge, inasmuch as He was not revealed to them and their age, yet it would be unjust to deny the best and greatest of their number a deep-seated and often admirable presentiment of the Divine. In none other do I find this attribute so decided as in Sophocles. It is, indeed, everywhere the destiny and course of poetry to commence with the wonderful and the sublime, with the mighty forms of heroes and gods. In the sequel, she lowers the elevation of her flight, approaches nearer to the earth, and falls at last into the tract of ordinary life, where all traces of her disappear. The middle region is the happiest for poetic purpose: in which heroic grandeur still survives, artless and unaffected, coupled with representations of deity, though no longer towering in giant-size, terrible as well as awful, but addressed to human sympathies, mild and tender. Such is precisely the character of Sophocles. The peculiar artistic form of Grecian tragedy, which he perfected, will often come under subsequent notice: more especially, when I proceed to examine the attempts of other nations—successful or

otherwise—to imitate and appropriate this lofty form of Greek poesy.

The character of Greek civilization, and of the most splendid period of the second age of the world, as I have before remarked, mainly rests both in art and in life itself, on lucid views of harmony and a social development. The artistic clearness, joined to the simplicity of a mind richly endowed by nature, is visible throughout Homer; but gentlest harmonious aspiration, though it is a prominent feature of Pindar's muse, is perfected only in Sophocles. Whilst the fancy of the Greeks, as of all nations at that period, was gradually weakened, till it sank, at last, from the sidereal system of primitive nature down into material life, pagan mythology itself—in this poet of harmony—though still sensuous, appears as the spiritual transfiguration of a feeling which anticipated the higher meaning of all divine mysteries.

Sophocles was succeeded in art, but not in sentiment or feeling, by Euripides, who, however, belongs to a totally different generation. He was as much of an orator as a poet and according to the favourable and unfavourable views taken of him, he may be termed a philosopher or a sophist; in this school he had been fashioned, and had acquired many an ornament unsuitable to poetry. His enemy and implacable persecutor, Aristophanes, does not forget constantly to remind him of this. But previous to entering upon this brief description of Euripides, as also of some other writers who flourished at the time of Greek degeneracy, it will be convenient to speak of the Sophists; and shew how they succeeded, in the commencement of the civil war and the dismemberment of states, to extend their deadly influence to every part of Greece, and to paralyze her intellectual life until Socrates took up the gauntlet against them, exerted himself to lead back the sophisticated Grecian spirit, as far as possible, to truth, and founded the School from which Plato issued.

LECTURE II.

Later Greek Literature.—Sophistry and Philosophy.—Alexandrinian Period.

In my first lecture, I endeavoured, briefly, to sketch the picture of Grecian genius, when flourishing in all its power and glory. I must now turn to the darker side of the picture, and exhibit that general degeneracy which soon followed with incredible rapidity, and after morals were corrupted and governments were destroyed, prostrated also, by a deceitful sophistry, the artistic power and genius of the Greeks.

Thucydides is the first great writer who represents, and attempts to explain with historic penetration, this total disorganization in the management of public affairs, and in the morals of society generally. His lofty style, deep reflectiveness, and earnest feeling, fully entitle him to rank with the leading Greek authors. His history is truly a masterpiece of representative art: as such it was considered even by ancient critics, and likened to a tragedy, not poetic but historical. Well, indeed, might that great civil war, and the decline of his once renowned and flourishing native country, appear to the historian himself a tragedy of appalling pathos. For in its ultimate consequences, as we are enabled to review them, but which did not then appear so clearly, this terrible event involved the history of the decline of collective Greece! Thucydides originated the artistic form of history peculiar to the Greeks, and in the structure of his work he has never been approached by later writers. The qualities characterizing this peculiar artistic form consist in the skill which is displayed in interweaving, in the web of history, elaborate political harangues, developing the various motives and views by which each of the contending factions was actuated: as also in a vivid and poetically detailed sketch of battles and other important events of constant recurrence in the page of history: and, again, in dignified flow of style, relieved by the chastest ornaments. Under similar political conditions, and with a like preponderating oratory, of all species of Greek art, this is the one which the Romans

could embody in their literature with the greatest facility and success. It is by no means equally suitable to the genius of our later European efforts: as will be seen from an examination of instances of imitation. For circumstances are altogether changed: the art of eloquence no longer possesses an influence so decisive and often injurious. With such an immense accumulation of facts, we now require, not so much poetical descriptions of battles and public occurrences generally, as brief accounts, effectively given, and clearly shewing *what* happened and *wherefore*. Perspicuous brevity like this—such as the unadorned, luminous simplicity of Herodotus—better correspond with our present wants in the department of history, than the lofty grandeur of form which Thucydides instituted. and in which, if not absolutely perfect, he is still to be regarded as the first of Greek writers. To entitle him to perfection, nothing is wanting in the arrangement or disposal of his subject, which is, throughout, grand, excellent, and as the ancients said of his work, worthy of comparison with the sublimity of historic tragedy: but his style is rugged, harsh, and at times, obscure. Whether a complete revision of the work, as a whole, had not been made, as a learned critic suggests: or, whether it was owing to the age, which witnessed the birth of prose, and hence the difficulty experienced by the historian, when, having conceived the design of so elevated a style, he endeavoured to efface the traces of laborious toil, and strained exertion: but, if neither of these explanations should prove satisfactory, it may be conjectured that the author purposely conveyed sentiments,—though cast in the mould of highest art,—in a diction both rude and repulsive as best suited to the dark contents of his tragic description. He had to treat of that terrible catastrophe, the decline and fall of his country, and he wrote not for the passing hour, but, as he himself expresses it in the commencement of his history, he meant to construct "a possession for all time."*

But History generally, which, from its nature, occupies a position between rhetorical representation and critical enquiry, in both the kinds developed by the Greeks in their first great period, inclines more to the poetic and artistic element than to a philosophic comprehension of different

* κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί.

ages of universal development, scientifically arranged, and conformable to the genius of modern times. In mythographers and in Herodotus, this species of composition is linked to the epic treatment of the older rhapsodists: whilst in later, more artistic, political histories, it emulates the drama, till in Thucydides it fairly challenges comparison with Tragedy.

If Thucydides clearly sets before us and explains the disorganization of all the states and institutions of Greece, with the causes of the same; Aristophanes on the other hand depicts the degraded condition into which Athenian and Grecian manners, generally, had sunk, with a vigour almost incredible, and such as no historical work, and no other memorial whatever could pourtray so distinctly. As a faithful representation of the customs and manners of antiquity, the value of his works is now universally acknowledged and indubitable. If we would judge of him as a writer and poet, we must, of course, go back in imagination to the age in which he lived. In some nations and epochs of modern Europe, literature, poetry, and the efforts of the mind, generally, have been charged with an almost exclusive regard for the applause of the upper classes, and, more especially, of the softer sex. Among the writers themselves, belonging to the times thus inculpated, there have not been wanting those who complained of the tendency of so much misplaced ornament, and undue refinement, to limit, if not enervate, the mental powers. There may have been ground for this complaint; ancient literature, on the other hand, is justly subjected to the reproach of being too exclusively *masculine*, and thus presenting, in some portions of its history, a ruder picture than might, on the whole, have been expected from its intellectual development and refinement. In the earliest times, as they are brought before our contemplation by the Homeric poems, the condition of the softer sex was worthier, more free, and favourable to the promotion of social improvement. Afterwards, the Greeks continued, more and more, to imitate the Asiatics in their practice of isolating, confining, and oppressing the female sex. The very institutions of republicanism, filling up, as they did, the life and soul of citizens with civic affairs, with genuine or pseudo-patriotic feelings, with the rancour of political

parties, with some one of which every body sided, were adverse to the influence and condition of that sex. These circumstances were not, indeed, every where the same: nay, considerable difference obtained in the customs and political enactments of the several Greek states in this particular as in many others. In Sparta, and throughout the Doric confederacy, as also under the new social regulations introduced by the Pythagoreans, the natural rights and dignity of woman were far more respected. But, upon the whole, Greece very closely imitated the Asiatic customs of female separation and isolation, and the unfavourable results are but too apparent in the whole extent of her literature. Therefore, we miss, even in her noblest productions—though distinguished by almost every other excellence and advantage —the delicate bloom of feminine tenderness. This, whilst it should not be common to every kind of writing, and must never be far-fetched, is painfully missed, when we have a right to expect it, and its opposite strikes us with greater disgust. In consequence of this want, ancient, and particularly Greek, writers, did not, in individual cases, come up to a standard of perfection proportioned to the general civilization and happy intellectual development that formed their national characteristics. A complete deterioration of manners and unnatural depravity attended the degradation of the sex, and thus, abundantly avenged their unjust oppression. The beauty of the fairest and loftiest productions of the ancients is marred, in our eyes, by reminding us, ever and anon, of a blemish in their social arrangements so flagrant and so perverse.

In treating of the degeneracy of Grecian manners, and of the writer who most graphically and forcibly depicts it —Aristophanes—we could not well avoid allusion to this universal deficiency. But, being once made thoroughly aware of the imperfection, with which no *one* writer ought, individually, to stand charged, since it pervaded the entire spirit of ancient civilization, both in manners and literature, we must not, on that account, withhold our meed of praise in considering the other great qualities to be remarked in such writers, so necessary to the whole development of art and culture. Thus, notwithstanding all deficiencies, Aristophanes is to be viewed in the positive light of a great poet.

It is true his species and form of composition, if, indeed, it can be called an actual and regular form, cannot be adopted by ourselves. The old Comedy, from the circumstances of its earliest origin, is connected with the worship of nature. In the celebration of festivals dedicated to Bacchus, and other jovial deities, every kind of merriment, including the most licentious freedom of humour, was not merely permitted, but regarded as a religious act. It cannot be denied that Fancy —in its essential nature admitting of no limits—is the poet's peculiar inheritance, and thus the self-same impulse to give the slackened rein to her impetuous course, to disregard all the restraints of laws and customs, has stirred in the bosoms of bards in other times and under altered circumstances. The genuine poet, when, for a brief season, he has demanded this time-hallowed privilege of Saturnalian licence, for undisturbed play of fancy, has ever felt that, if he would make good his claim to an equality of birthright, he must display not only a prodigality of inventive genius, but the highest splendour of finished versification: thereby proving that no prosaic wantonness, no personal motive prompted him, but that he was inspired by poetic daring. This is entirely applicable to Aristophanes. In diction and poesy, he is not merely of acknowledged excellence, but may challenge comparison with the first poets that Greece ever produced. In many serious passages, which Athenian popular comedy, owing to the irregularity and variety of structure, did not exclude, he proves himself to be a true poet, who might have become eminently successful in the more earnest and lofty efforts of Art, had he chosen to attempt them. However mixed the contents of his dramas, however little a considerable portion of his witticisms is calculated to satisfy or please our modern tastes, yet, after every deduction on the score of offensive matter, there remains a lavish exuberance of wit, inventive fancy, and poetic boldness. A licence like that of Aristophanes, could, of course, only be indulged in so unbridled a democracy as Athens at that period. But that Comedy, whose original function was temporary diversion of the assembled populace, was susceptible of so rich a poetic decoration, or, perhaps, needed it, gives us a high idea, if not of their culture, strictly so called, yet of the lively popular spirit and animated feeling

of that wonderful city, which became at once the rendezvous and focus of Grecian oratory and refinement, as of Grecian immorality and corruption. Aristophanes is the most material of ancient poets: nevertheless great, and in his department, classic, from his copious imagination and keen poetic invention. He may, therefore, by all means, in this capacity, rank with the great Tragic writers: and if, in their respective compositions, Aeschylus reveals to us a lofty grandeur of spirit, Sophocles a beautiful harmony of soul, both in the highest degree: the great Comic poet shews that, even in the depths of sensuous matter, and in the treatment of subjects most material in kind, true poesy can exert itself with wanton power on the contrasts of real life and lavish upon them all her riches. This same fulness of genial invention and poetic wit is more akin to the lofty style of the serious dramatists, and in dithyrambic strength congenial to their spirit, than the rhetorical effeminacy and sentimental poverty of Euripides, as has often been allowed by competent critics of ancient poetry. The material subject of high Comedy is but the bearer of poetic wit, supporting the whole weight of its fulness: whilst this wit, if it be of the really poetic, the Aristophanic quality, contains the veritable and peculiar essence of poetry, expressed in re-action against the resisting power of gross reality. This will suffice to place Aristophanes, if not, indeed, as an exemplar of imitation, for which he is unfitted, at least in his true light as a poet. If we consider the purposes to which, both as a man and a citizen, he applied the poetic licence sanctioned by the customs of antiquity and the institutions of his country, even here much may be said in his justification, and not a little to conciliate our esteem. The most advantageous light in which he is to be viewed is that of a patriot, in which capacity he takes cognizance of all deficiencies of the state, and mercilessly attacks mischievous demagogues with a courage at once dangerous, meritorious, and rare in the midst of a democracy, and in times of anarchy. When, in accordance with inveterate enmity and customary parody which comic writers practised on the Tragedians, he scourges Euripides with indefatigable and unrelenting fury, it is striking to observe how materially his tone changes in alluding to Aeschylus, and, his own contemporary, Sophocles, of whom he speaks not

merely with evident lenity, but with deep veneration. He has been charged with the grave offence of reviling and representing in odious colours the most virtuous and wise of his fellow-citizens—Socrates; perhaps, however, it was not owing to mere poetic caprice, but that he seized one of the most illustrious names for the purpose of deriding and rendering execrable, under cover of it, the Sophists—a tribe than whom none more richly deserved such treatment. Possibly, without intending it, the poet confounded the philosopher, in his search after truth at first entering their schools, with the Sophists themselves, whose tenets Socrates studied only to refute them, and whose society he frequented only until he learnt the emptiness of their doctrines to which he gave battle, while he sought to lead the Greeks back to truth by an entirely novel path.

Not only were the polity and social customs of the Greeks, but also rhetoric, and all the arts influenced by speech, as also *thought* generally, poisoned and thoroughly prostrated by Sophistry, till Socrates opposed a barrier to the flowing tide, arresting, as far as he could, the ravages of its onward progress. This zealous friend and explorer of truth, a citizen of Athens, living in the simplest and most retired manner, and operating only on a small circle of select scholars and like-minded friends, impressed the intellectual culture of the Greeks by means of an influence perhaps greater than that of Solon the legislator, who preceded, and of Alexander the conqueror, who followed, him. But, in order fully to comprehend the importance of this memorable struggle in which Socrates was engaged, the ensuing regeneration of philosophy, and the fresh impulse it gave to the genius of Greece, it will be necessary to take a retrospective glance at the earlier philosophy and popular belief of that country, and to examine into the origin of the Sophistry, which sprang up between the two.

However distinguished the pre-eminence of the Greeks in all that appertains to art and culture, and appears on the surface of human character, it cannot be denied that the fundamental views they entertained of the nature and properties of things, of the origin of the world, and the destiny of man, as well as of the essence of divinity, were, upon the whole, very material and unsatisfactory, if not utterly ob-

jectionable. The older Grecian philosophers were themselves of this opinion, inasmuch as they passed severe strictures on Homer and Hesiod, as the most popular and extensive originators of mythology, on account of the unworthy and immoral representations they made of deity in their songs and poems. Those poems pass with us now only for an agreeable play of the imagination, ministering to our delight and our amusement. But when we recollect that the views they propound were regarded in the popular belief as truths, and when we reflect on the consequences of this, and the uses to which they were applied, we must needs, while admiring the magic of the verse, concur, in some measure, with those philosophers in their denunciation of the muse. At least, we appreciate and understand the grounds of their disapprobation. It may be said that they were too much biassed by their hostility to poetry, and that their censure is far too indiscriminate: the mental development of the Greeks was, indeed, of so varied a character, that it is no easy matter to pronounce a verdict of general application, especially to remoter ages. Thus, it is highly probable that the earlier songs, prior to Homer, those commemorating the labours of Hercules, the battles of giants, gods, and heroes, the storming of Thebes by the seven warrior-chiefs, but, especially, the wondrous expedition of the Argonauts, had, in a great measure, a deeper significancy and more exalted views than the later heroic songs of the Trojan period. Some portions, possibly, accorded in a greater degree with Asiatic traditions, than did the subsequent modes of thought: or, at least, were suggestive of them, as, for instance, the imaginative description of the successive ages of the world, handed down in the name of Hesiod. First the golden, commencing with a perfect innocence, and the undisturbed blissful enjoyment of life, when man associated with the gods and led a godlike life. Then the silver age, inferior in degree and worth. Last the brazen, a period of lawless violence and rude force, indicative of gradual degeneracy. In regard to this allegorical meaning of the older Greek poetry, Orpheus, though personally fabulous, remains a name not altogether devoid of import to the historian: expressing, as it does, the minstrel who revealed and openly disseminated the secrets of old tradition and consecrated

symbols, in heroic song, agreeably to the genius of his time. However the case may have been in remoter antiquity, in the Homeric poems this deeper significancy is all but obliterated, and has left scarcely any trace, however faint, behind. In the Theogony, attributed to Hesiod, which seems to have been pretty generally diffused, and may serve as a standard of measurement for the rest, the meaning is sufficiently obvious, but very material, and altogether contemptible. The world, according to his account, sprang from Chaos. Not to mention the many unseemly and preposterous notions of the gods, nature is represented in inexhaustible fertility and vitality, under many allegories, all resolving themselves into the conception of an infinite and eternal animal. In this mythology, the life of nature is conceived in the idea of perpetual change from love to hatred, attraction and repulsion, without any intimation of a higher spirit, which, whilst eminently intelligible in the inner man, at least occasionally, breaks through and is manifested in certain phenomena of Nature.

Such theology is, in reality, positive materialism, not indeed as yet reduced to system, as a professed science or philosophy, but appealing in poetic garb to the people's sympathies. This cannot be alleged of Homer, for in him no such material views are ever enunciated. In his picture of humanity, wherein the gods are introduced as mere shapes of poetic imagination, scarcely any allusion is made to what, in a philosophical and general sense, we term Religion, or to any false opinions usurping its place. There is no infidelity, denial, or objectionable material apprehension of the same, but, rather, total ignorance and childlike ingenuousness, combined, as in the case of children, here and there with delightful freshness of feeling, with a happy presentiment, and an occasional flash of truth. Looking, then, from our point of view, we should not be inclined to disturb the ancient verdict, as far as it concerns Hesiod, and would assent to it as just though severe, but our judgment of Homer must be far more favourable. Yet it may easily be understood how some things involved in his myths, gave offence to the later moralists of his nation, nor can it be concealed that his representation of the gods, in a poetic or moral light, actually constitutes the weak side of his poems. If Homeric heroes

sometimes appear superhuman and divine in their strength and greatness, the Homeric gods, on the other hand, are frequently found grosser, more subject to human infirmity, and in every respect less god-like than the heroes. This is easy of explanation, since the character and general treatment of the gods belonged rather to the significancy of old tradition, than to the ennobling imagination of the bard. Everything relating to the gods had originally, in the popular mind, a significancy, for the most part connected with nature. Ideas of such natural significancy, embodied in the actions of beings resembling humanity, could not fail to present frequent images of absurdity and seeming immorality. The instance of Saturn or Kronos, devouring his own children, need alone be cited. Taken in a human and moral acceptation, this is a hideous conception, yet nothing more is intended than to depict the changing reproductiveness of nature continually eliminating her own offspring. Hesiod is full of similar conceits which, unless they are considered in relation to nature and a hidden meaning, are offensive and disgusting. Much in the same way, the allegorical import of most original representations of their divinities, common to antiquity, is apt to be detrimental to the beauty of many of the imitative arts. Take, by way of illustration, the hundred-armed giant, simply a symbol of strength and powerful activity. In a poem, as met with in Homer and Hesiod, the image is not so repugnant, for it does not, in thought, stand out in such bold relief: but when sculptured in enduring marble it produces a figure resembling those idols which still inspire us with feelings of monstrous disgust, as we view them among Asiatic nations. Or in the case of similar representations nobler and more intellectual, but incompatible with beauty of proportion. The Indians have expressed their idea of deity as once creative, preservative, and destructive, by a three-headed statue. In keeping with a like symbolical reference, the Indian Brahma has four heads, and the old Roman Janus had two faces. All these allegories are unfavourable to beauty of form. For the same reason, sculpture attained a higher degree of perfection among the Greeks than it did among the Egyptians, since the former gradually forsook ancient symbols when they led to monstrosity, without altogether losing sight of reference to the Divine. Individual poets

especially Pindar, who from the bent of their genius sought to beautify and ennoble all objects, endeavoured to veil much that was rude and offensive to the moral feelings in the old mythic legends. But the same amount of success that was observable in sculpture could not possibly attend their efforts, since ancient poetry was entirely dependent upon mythology, the nature of which it was not competent for any one poet to alter at his will, or even considerably to modify. Even in Homer, who, most of all the poets, represents the gods in human phase, vestiges of this kind are to be found. One example will suffice to render this distinctly intelligible. When Jupiter, in passionate outburst, tells the gods that if they fastened a chain to heaven, and all of them clung to it, they would still be too feeble to tear him from his throne, but that, if he pleased, he could pull them all up to him, at the first glance, this wears the appearance of gross and unseemly rhodomontade. But beyond all doubt, it is an allegorical allusion to the concatenation of all beings, and so the ancients explained it. A clearer illustration still is found in another passage, which, at the first, seems exceedingly repulsive and absurd. In another of his customary paroxysms, Jupiter bids Juno remember the punishment she once received for persecuting his dear son Hercules. On which occasion, the queen of the gods is represented as having been suspended from the firmament of heaven, with hands fettered and an anvil attached to each foot. Some allegorical thought unquestionably floated before the poet's fancy, and, perchance, he recalled to memory some distinct hieroglyphic picture. Yet, after all, passages of this sort are, proportionately, rare in Homer, and this has induced commentators to reject portions here and there, as spurious additions, contrary to the spirit of his genius: whilst later critics have contended sharply respecting their actual import, to which they have attached the most opposite explanations. In an artistic point of view, these symbols form the background of a remote and sacerdotal past, in the immortal picture of the noblest epic that has come down to us. After the connection of individual features had long been lost, and the simple meaning of ancient natural impressions had disappeared, free scope was given for the most manifold variety of interpretation.

Nevertheless, these and such like representations fell under the obloquy of moralists regarding them, as they must, from their point of view, and hence exception was taken to Homer, and to poetry generally. Besides these vestiges of a remote epoch, of a system of symbols no longer understood, the Mythology was repulsive to moralists on other grounds. From the practice of the ancients to trace the lineage of their most celebrated names to heroic genealogies, and these, in their turn, to deities, the father of the gods more particularly, had so numerous an heroic offspring, and so long was the catalogue of his mortal paramours, that Ovid has filled whole poems and books with detailed descriptions of them. As has before been observed, all this appears to us a mere play of the imagination, fitted to amuse us, though never worthy of being submitted to our serious judgment. But could the moralists in question so easily dispose of that which formed the subject of prevalent, popular belief? A belief, moreover, on which was founded the whole of social arrangement and public education, and which made the immoral applications in connection with it so palpably evident!

So far then the censure of the older philosophy is both intelligible and justifiable, if we transport ourselves to the right stand-point. We must, however, discriminate between Homer in particular and the old mythology generally. Despite all defects, Homer has been the fruitful parent of so much that is good and beautiful, to Greece and the whole of Europe, that we cannot refrain from feeling under obligations to Solon and the Pisistratidæ for having preserved the Poet who might have been suffered to fall into oblivion, had the opinion of the philosophers of the time prevailed. But of Greek mythology generally, without including this prince of the ancient poets, it must be confessed that in times with which we are historically familiar, it is deserving of censure, not only offensive to individual morality, but essentially material in all its views, and thoroughly objectionable and impious. Yet these same philosophers who so severely reproved poets and their mythology, and would have altogether supplanted them, did not, previous to the time of Socrates, elevate their own faculties to a comprehension of *divinity*, some few of their number contenting themselves

with a more reflective veneration for nature. The transition from a system like theirs to that of the Sophists was almost imperceptible, and the latter soon proved more dangerous to civil and social interests than the poets had ever been in their innocence and simplicity.

The philosophy of the ancients, like their poetry, emanated from the Asiatic Greeks. The region in which Homer and Herodotus were bred, likewise produced the first and greatest philosophers: not only Thales and Heraclitus, who established in their own country the so-called Ionic school, but those, too, who disseminated their doctrines throughout Magna Græcia and southern Italy, such as the poet Xenophanes, and Pythagoras, the founder of the great philosophic league. In art and poetry, we are already prepared to admire the Greeks: but, perhaps, in no department of knowledge, has their genius exhibited so much of activity and rich invention, as in that of philosophy. Their very errors are instructive, since they were, every where, the fruits of independent thought. They found no beaten track of truth: but were, themselves, compelled to pioneer a path in all directions of their enquiry: they are, therefore, best fitted to testify how far man may proceed in the investigation of truth by his natural powers alone. Let us briefly consider the particulars of this philosophy.

The Ionic sages revered one or the other element of nature, as a primary force: Thales, water—Heraclitus, fire. It must not be supposed that this was accepted in a corporeal sense. In addition to the nutritive and all-productive power of water, they recognized in liquid form the principle of constant change and mobility in nature. Neither was it the external, visible flame, that Heraclitus adduced as the *principium* of nature, but, pre-eminently, the latent heat, the inner fire, which was held by the ancients to constitute the energetic vigour of all things animate. The tenets of Heraclitus, the originator of this doctrine, were, probably, of a highly intellectual character. But the example of Anaxagoras best proves how little the mind of this school could disengage itself from the shackles of matter. Though he is generally reckoned to have been the first who, prior to Socrates, acknowledged an Intelligence governing in nature and above nature, and regulating the universe, yet, when he came to

explain the constitution of the world, he betook himself to little simple atoms, of which, according to the doctrine of materialism, all matter was compounded. This doctrine of mechanical union had been completely systematized by those early Greeks—Leucippus and Democritus—and, in the later teaching of Epicurus, had exercised an influence over both Greeks and Romans, in a degree equal to its sway in the eighteenth century. This is that pure materialism which abolishes every idea of a Deity.

Let it not be supposed that these were mere speculations, without any influence on human life. The deficiencies of the popular belief of the Greeks, and of the older philosophy previous to Socrates' time, are most manifest in their doctrines concerning the immortality of the soul. The indistinct world of shadows, whose outlines appear in their belief and in their bards, was a poetic dream, which as soon as reflection was awakened, was exchanged for scepticism or downright unbelief. In the mysteries, or secret religious societies, spread over Greece as well as Egypt, some few doctrines relative to a future life, more definitely shaped, but still in allegory, would seem to have been taught; but they were confined to a narrow circle. The earlier and later philosophers, in their attempts to prove immortality, thought only of the indestructibility of primary force, without reference to personal continued existence. Ideas referring to such a future, a personal immortality, as it were, Pythagoras seems to have been the first to propagate. Though his teaching was not unalloyed, inasmuch as he connected immortality, like the Orientals, with transmigration of souls, yet he is elevated far above all the elder Greek philosophers, and, as an apostle of truth, greatly benefited his nation. But his league, aiming, no doubt, at political power, and impracticable without a total subversion of the old creed, crumbled away before his designs were perfected, and from his time down to Socrates the interval* was filled up by growing anarchy and confusion.

The strange inconsistency of opinions, conceived and maintained, and disseminated by means of accomplished rhetoric: the doubt and infidelity, thence ensuing, the confusion of all ideas, the loosening of all fixed principles,

* About eighty years.

were never displayed, in the entirety of their noxious influence on life, so fully as at that period. One section of these ancient philosophers, whilst differing on various points, had this in common, that they looked upon nature purely on the side of its perpetual change and motion. They held that all things were in a constant flux. They carried this assertion so far as to deny that any thing at all was fixed and permanent: they denied that anything was stable in existence—anything absolutely indubitable in knowledge, or any principle of universal application in morals: in other words, they ignored, together with Divinity, truth and justice.

Another section, entertaining rational views of an immutable *Unity*, were diametrically opposite in their opinions, since they denied the possibility of motive power, as well as the actual existence of a world of sense, and sought to maintain their paradoxes with the highest dialectic skill: hence at least so much of their purpose was effected that doubt and uncertainty became more and more general. One of the first and greatest of these Sophists commenced his teaching with the express assertion: that, in itself, there is no such thing as truth: that, if there were truth, it were incapable of being apprehended by man; and that, if it were intelligible, it would, still, be incommunicable to him. Pure scepticism might readily be permitted to the reasoner, if he had attained to so joyless and unsatisfactory a conviction after a process of diligent and honest enquiry, and if his artificial ignorance were removed from the possibility of acting injuriously or destructively on every-day life, but confined to his own bosom. But the Sophists had disciples and adherents throughout all Greece; the education of all the noble and ingenuous youth was in their hands. Neither was their scepticism an honest one, for, whilst some taught that nothing can be definitely known, others maintained that they were omniscient masters of each art and every science. They easily succeeded in enabling their followers to perplex and beguile the unwary and less experienced by means of certain sophisms, and in the end cheated themselves into the delusion that they were competent to decide upon the merits of all things, easily and promptly—as it were by innate instinct—much better than

their predecessors, whom no opportunity was missed to ridicule. It was one of the practices in their schools not merely to defend, at will, opposite opinions, in order to sharpen the mental faculties, and improve oratory: but, further than this, it was a customary study to make an avowed falsehood appear truthful by means of ingenious arguments, and thus impose on their fellow citizens. It was laid down as a dogma that there was no other virtue than dexterity and force, in cool contempt of all moral axioms, which, it was alleged, served only to mislead weaker men, and were pronounced to be mere superstitious folly—and that there was no other right than the right of the stronger, or the will of the ruler. In these schools, too, the popular belief was ridiculed, which, with all its defects, was, yet, connected in many minds with noble and moral feeling, and should, therefore, have been spared so long as nothing better could be provided in its place. Not only were many contradictory expositions, empty and perverse notions respecting the world and its great first cause, generally propagated, but the existence of a deity was ignored, inasmuch as all sense of truth and justice was blasted and rooted up.

And all this in states which were, moreover, on the brink of ruin, given over to unbridled democracy and the blind fury of contending factions, weakened and shattered by war, plunging from one bloody revolution into another, and sinking fast and deeper into anarchy.

In the midst of such universal atheism, Socrates arose, and inculcated anew the doctrine of a God in a practical manner; he first attacked the Sophists and unveiled their nothingness: then, he set goodness and beauty, nobility and perfection, righteousness and virtue, as well as all that leads to God and issues from him, in varied modes before men's eyes, and touched their hearts. Thus, he became the second founder and the restorer of the nobler and loftier intellectual culture of the Greeks, but fell, in his own person, a victim to his zeal for truth. His death is too memorable an event in the history of humanity, not to deserve a few moments' attention at our hands.

The single charge that was brought against him, that of having introduced the doctrine of a new and unknown God, and which was, therefore, a species of treason against

the state that had adhered to the gods of popular belief, was, indeed, in a certain sense founded on what must needs redound to Socrates' credit. If the Socratic system of thought, which was altogether new to Greece, had not merely been confided to the circle of a few select disciples, but become prevalent throughout that country, the mode and habits of life, together with a considerable portion of the people's creed, would either have been abolished, or must have undergone an entire remodelling. In anticipation of this, some narrow-minded followers of the old religion were eager to heap calumny upon the head of Socrates, and hastened to confound him with those very Sophists and new teachers whose doctrines he was combating; whilst with many it was, doubtless, a mere pretext—the political views of Socrates constituting the actual ground of their hatred.

Under all circumstances, Socrates had approved himself an excellent citizen and a courageous patriot, but he was the declared foe of democracy, at least the majority of his adherents were. The manner, as exhibited in Xenophon and Plato, of preferring, sometimes with excessive partiality, the institutions of Sparta, and those inclining to aristocracy, generally, could not but appear odious and unpatriotic at Athens. Nor were all the foes of democracy, who issued from the school of Socrates, equally blameless and noble with Xenophon and Plato. Critias, too, had attended the teaching of Socrates: Critias, one of the thirty tyrants who ruled in Athens, through Spartan influence, after that city had lost its independence. An ancient writer, not without some show of reason, alleges this circumstance to have been the chief cause of Socrates' untimely end.

It is somewhat difficult satisfactorily to explain how Socrates arrived at his peculiar views. He was acquainted with the higher philosophy without being perfectly satisfied with it. On several occasions he referred to a higher *genius* or *dæmon* that controlled his actions: and it is not easy to decide whether this meant the small still voice of conscience, the suggestion and decision of his reasoning faculties, or something different. There is like difficulty in determining what his views of the popular creed were: whether he rejected it entirely, or retained some purer portion of the same. He seems to have been familiar with all that

was known to the secret societies of the day. From those sentiments which the philosophy of the eighteenth century would as unhesitatingly term superstitious, as did the all-knowing and unbelieving sages he opposed, he was certainly not free. One instance will serve to shew how frequently, even in this particular, he was misrepresented and wrongly estimated. In the last conversation he had with his friends, just before his death, to the enquiry if he had any further request to make, he replied: none, save that a cock be sacrified to Aesculapius. This has been found fault with: for, say the critics, in his last moments he either paid homage to popular superstition, the futility of which he must have discovered, or if he mocked it, the jest was, at least, unseasonable. But the significancy of his meaning is plain. It was usual for convalescents from a long and severe illness to make this votive offering to Aesculapius. The thought, so beautifully developed by several of his successors, lay, like a fair gem, enshrined within his words; that this life was destined to be only a preparation for a more exalted one, or, as expressed by the ancients, that man might learn to die. Life, in the abstract, —but how much more forcibly the life of his troubled times—was regarded by Socrates as a prison of the nobler soul: as a malady from which the serene sage was content and happy to be delivered by death, since it was so ordained. In the condemnation of suicide, however, if not the first, he was certainly the most decided of all ancient philosophers: maintaining that it was clearly a crime against self, and against God. He would, by no means consent to escape from prison and death. Neither could he have done so, without, materially, detracting from his own dignity and that of his cause, which, now that he had bequeathed to his followers so noble an example of constancy in having sealed his convictions with his death, was held in increased reverence by posterity and recognized to be the cause of virtue as well as truth.

From the rich store of the ancient Greek philosophy it has only been my wish to introduce here a few outlines for sketching a general picture: I have, especially, selected what is historically true, what, from its reference to life, seemed generally remarkable, and was most capable of being clearly elucidated.

From this digression, I now return to a brief description

of the most distinguished writers. Beauty of style intimately connects Xenophon with the best authors of antiquity. As an historian, he excels Thucydides in ease and clearness of expression, as also in artless grace. But, as he is deficient in elevation of sentiment, those who are accustomed to reflect deeply will incline to the ruggedness of Thucydides. In giving a philosophical description of the Socratic dialogues, he is far inferior to Plato, not only in depth of thought but in richness of illustration and artistic skill. His political romance of the life of Cyrus deserves mention, as being unique of its kind in antiquity: yet, this hybrid species of history, poetry, and morals, notwithstanding its individual beauties, is, on the whole, not to be recommended for imitation.

Whilst Xenophon and other Socratic writers laboured to restore beauty and simplicity of style, sophistry continued to exercise its baleful influence on Grecian rhetoric generally. The example of Isocrates proves to us how far this artificial subtility of language and expression was carried—among an intellectual people—a subtility which frequently rejoiced in selecting fictitious subjects at random, without the slightest reference to their applicability or value,—in preference to others of intrinsic importance—simply for the purpose of practising oratorical flow, and the play of imagination. There is, doubtless, some artistic merit in the care with which their sentences were composed, the choice position of each word, the cadence of every syllable, the diligent rounding of periods, the nice finish of the whole. To us, indeed, this ornamental elegance, and elaborate polish, may seem, peculiarly, to commend itself, culpable, as we are, in the extreme of unjustifiable negligence. But this art should not be felt, ought not to be conscious of its own presence, for we experience its disturbing effect—even in sculpture. And yet, here, the case is widely different: it is much less disagreeable to be reminded by the dead stone, of elaborate art: than it is by written productions. Language was never intended to be mere inanimate art, but free, living, and acting upon life itself.

Plato and Aristotle, whom here I am treating of simply as writers, mark out at once the whole extent of Greek culture, and the extreme height and depth to which the genius

of that country, at any time, attained. The first, considered and represented philosophy entirely as an art: the second, as science, in the fullest sense of the word; since with philosophy he comprehended physics and natural history, general history, politics, and learning, and thus reduced all the knowledge of the Greeks to one system.

In the representative and poetical portions of his dialogues, especially in language and artistic feeling, Plato was esteemed by the ancients as the greatest of their prose writers. His distinguishing excellence lies in the manifold variety with which he is enabled to approach each subject, from artificial abstractions and subtleties—through the labyrinths of which he pursues the Sophists,—to poetic passages, occasionally of dithyrambic power, in which he communicates his philosophical fictions and myths. Considered merely as descriptive works, his *Phædo* and *Republic*, belong to the noblest productions of Greek genius.

Aristotle closes the circle of classical development, as regards the form and method of philosophy, which he perfected for the world at that period. Its first epoch is marked by Ionic thinkers, with their aphorisms and gnomic prose, which we have already considered as the most primitive form of philosophic contemplation. Others, like Parmenides and Empedocles, returned once more to poetry. By means of the Sophists, and then, though in a purer spirit, by means of the Socratic school, philosophic exposition, during the second epoch of its history, became thoroughly rhetorical and dialectic, assuming, at the last, the form of dialogue. In this department of philosophic teaching, Plato outstrips all competitors in ever-changing variety of example and prototype in every species of art: in most manifold gradations, from the abstract web of pure dialectic thought, to the richest dramatic vivacity, and most genial descriptions of character: one charming whole of philosophic fiction and poetic allegory. The critical comparison of the older systems, which was instituted by Plato, was continued by Aristotle with fuller completeness; so that, by his thoroughly critical method he grew to be the founder of systematized discourse, in those works of his which aimed at as great a perfection of science as was possible: this may be regarded as the third epoch of philosophy in its form of development. Subsequent schools

alternated the systematic, Aristotelian method, with the Platonic form of dialogue, in philosophy. Till at a much later period, a purely rhetorical process of philosophy obtained in the Syncretic and Eclectic schools of new Platonism.

These two master-spirits, Plato and Aristotle, have for two thousand years exercised immense influence over the progress of mental effort throughout Asia and Europe; of this further mention will be made in another place. As a writer, Aristotle is marked by the refined elegance that was beginning to characterize his age. Whilst Plato was considered an archetype of excellence in language, art, and the essence of Grecian, more especially Attic, culture: Aristotle influenced learning, rendered criticism more acute, and developed all the resources of historic science, in the most decided and profitable manner. Aristotle's immediate successor, Theophrastus, the character-painter, as also those of Plato's school, were men of general culture, their writings being composed in a noble and pleasing style. The philosophic sects that followed appeared to great disadvantage in this respect: the adherents of Epicurus relaxing into a negligent slipshod manner, whilst the Stoics indulged in bombastic verbosity, and an affected technicality of language. Universal degeneracy of mind began to manifest itself very clearly in the form of expression.

The restoration of philosophy by Socrates did not extend to the whole of Greek intellect: it operated directly on but a few who every day withdrew themselves more and more from social life, and disowned any connexion or sympathy with the nation that was tottering fast into lowest degradation. On poetry—to which I now return—it could scarcely have had any influence at all, inasmuch as that art depended altogether on mythology, popular belief, ancient tradition and usage, and when national life had, as it were, lost its vivifying and sustaining force, poetry could only be called an echo of the early glorious past of inventive bards.

In the later poetry of the Greeks, then, we behold the mere picture of continual decline; yet this period is not without occasional beauties, and distinct traces of Grecian intellect and poetic faculty.

Of the decline of tragic art, it will be remembered, we perceived the first tokens in Euripides, however excellent he

may be in pathos, however rich, here and there, in lyric charm. This less perfect form of his, as compared with the older Tragedians, is especially manifested in the want of unity and connection in his compositions. It has, previously, been remarked that ancient tragedy took its rise from those choral and festive songs, based on mythology, peculiar to the Greeks. The chorus is inseparable from the very essence of old tragedy, seeing that it is altogether lyric in its nature and properties. This peculiarity has been felt by modern poets when they sought to imitate or appropriate the form. Perfect accord and suitable relation between the chorus and the dramatic action are, hence, essential to the perfection of tragedy such as this. In Sophocles, harmonious unison of the two is thoroughly realized; but in Euripides, the chorus wanders over the whole domains of mythology, as though its position were merely one of tradition and custom. Thus, likewise, many lyric beauties, in themselves exquisite, which the poet had acquired in the schools of the Sophists, as also long oratorical speeches, are frequently introduced out of place. Now that true harmony had departed, and the lyric elements were no longer an integral part of the whole, dramatic action, such as had formerly filled up the interstices of tragedy, bore the appearance of meagre poverty. In order to enrich it, the poet betook himself to various expedients, in the shape of complications, surprises, double catastrophes, intrigues, more suitable to comedy, and not in harmony with the dignity of Tragedy.

The last poet who depicted Athenian life in a novel and original manner, was Menander; the founder, or finisher, of elegant Comedy, and whose merits we are in a condition, approximately, to estimate, by the imitations or translations of Terence. Dramatic art, which, in Æschylus, began with the heroically great and wonderful, had thus reached its last stage. Leaving the obscurity and mighty forms of a poetic past, it gradually drew nearer to the present, ending with a spirited representation of ordinary life; and when the characters, situations, and combinations of the same were completely exhausted, it terminated its career and ceased to exist. Many of the ancients doubted if a description of *real* life, and of the present, in a word, if every day Comedy belonged to the department of poetry. Many de-

nied that it was, and held that mythology, no less than verse, was one of its essential properties. In our acceptation of the word, the living representation of life cannot, by any means, be excluded from the domains of poesy, even without the elements of the wonderful and the fictitious. The first and primitive destination of poesy, in reference to mankind and to life generally—and this, in a national point of view, should be its acceptation—is, doubtless, to preserve and embellish traditions and reminiscences of a glorious past, that are peculiar to a people: as is the case in epics, in which free scope is given to the wonderful, and the poet conforms himself to the mythology. The second destination of poetry is to set clearly before men's eyes a distinct and lively portraiture of actual life. This is feasible in other works of art likewise: but nowhere else so vividly, or with such graphic force as in the Drama. It is not alone the outward surface of life that poesy is intended to mirror: she may serve also to arouse the higher life of inward feeling. The essence of poetry, thus directed, is enthusiasm, or that exalted state of feeling manifesting itself in various shapes and forms which, as soon as this bent predominates, merges into lyric art.

In our estimation, then, the nature and being of poetry consist of invention, expression and inspiration. In the first of these, invention, the other two elements, expression, and inspiration, are fully comprehended; but without actual invention, and without the *marvellous*, a work of the intellect and of language may be poetical by means of expression or inspiration alone, and deserve so to be called. These same elements of poetry we have before described as consisting of tradition, song, and figure, which, viewed from another point, are similar to the components I have mentioned. Poetry, if not a pure fiction, but having reference to a given subject shoots forth from Legend, as its natural root, and tradition, or legend, really constitutes the material foundation, the visible body of poetry. But inspiration is the soul of song, in the same manner as the artistic portraiture of the divine life, at which the ancients aimed in their tragedies, is the apex of poetical representation—when the inner spirit of poetry attains the summit of its aspirations. Thus, the life of poetry, like every species of exalted, inward life, rests on three principles, mind, spirit, and body or the sensuous

element, and on the harmonious co-operation of these united elements in an ascending scale.

Tradition, song, and figure, are the individual letters or syllables that compose and perfect the poetic triad and the eternal Word of poesy: the Word of nature, namely, such as the imagination includes in love,—and the Word of ardent feeling expressed in universal or national reminiscences, or in presentiments of the Divine. And this Word of poesy, itself, is but a part of the whole, the perfect Word, which was originally implanted, after the Divine image, in the several faculties of the soul, and to express which, in earthly covering, man is summoned into this world of sense.

Let us now glance back at the development of Greek poetry, in order to trace the same to its final stage. If we close the epoch of Attic culture with Menander, the last original Athenian poet, who described real life as well as influenced it, it constitutes a period— reckoning from Solon —of just three hundred years.

The poets who appeared subsequent to the extension of Greek power by Alexander's conquests, and who especially gathered round the court of the Ptolemies, are, at most, to be regarded as a gleaning of the ancient Greek poetry. With respect to language, the preservation and interpretation of memorial records, and, indeed, for the purposes of learned criticism generally, good service was rendered by the Court-philosophers, Academicians, and Librarians, of Alexandria. But they have that fault common to learned poets, affected expression too rarely avoided: not a few are designedly obscure. Some, who took to Epics or general mythological subjects, contributed at any rate, to the preservation of old poetry, and handing it down to posterity. Thus when the works of so many older poets have perished, it cannot but be gratifying to us to be in possession of the pleasing fable of the Argonauts, treated of by Apollonius—an elegant poet of this period. Having before them a rich store of ancient minstrelsy, those Alexandrinian bards, possibly, penetrated deeper here and there into the connection of primitive legends and the spirit of mythology, than their predecessors of the blooming period of literature. In this way Callimachus deserves especial notice, as having diligently studied the old traditions: a poetic Mythologist, and not destitute of poetic

genius; this is evidenced by the ardent Propertius, the Roman Elegiac poet, who caught the inspiration of his muse. Mythological subjects were now frequently treated in a systematic manner, verses of analogous method and import being grouped together. Poetic unity, as a whole, was destroyed, or, as in Ovid's Metamorphoses, was produced only by artificial transitions and unnatural combinations.

The tendency of poetry, when on its decline, is to become increasingly isolated and secluded, and to deal with topics which are foreign to its genius. It needs no critical acumen to demonstrate that scientific Astronomy, a chapter on Botany, or a string of Medical prescriptions, though embodied in verse, do not belong to poetry: or to shew that the didactic species of poem, as it is called, bequeathed to us by the Alexandrinians, is but an unnatural form of art. Modern writers have the less excuse for imitating this kind of composition, that they are altogether destitute of many advantages enjoyed by the Greeks. In the earliest ages, didactic poesy was made to subserve various purposes of purely scientific information, not in order to prove the facility with which difficult and unfavourable materials were handled, but for real instruction; either because no actual prose existed, or it was not sufficiently developed to employ expressions suitable to the theme, or, at any rate, the author felt himself more at home in Hexameters. Originally, then, the Grecian didactic form had sprung up from a natural necessity of their intellectual culture: a circumstance that must have been an advantage to the moderns when they came to adopt this mode of writing. Mythology, moreover, so completely peoples the whole visible world with its form and attractive fables, that it is impossible to think of any subject not, in some degree, connected with its fictions, and, therefore, capable of occupying some department of ancient poesy. Even, when treating of medicine or botany, numerous opportunities occurred to the poet, of which he availed himself, to introduce some poetic allusion from fable-land, or some episode, without the slightest semblance of stiffness: but this constitutes the very charm of these poems, a charm which, in its native freshness and unimpaired by art, the moderns can never present to us.

There is, however, one kind of poetry, appertaining to this

latter period, more attractive to our taste, being not mere imitative art, but a delineation of life in a peculiar aspect. I allude to bucolic, or pastoral poetry: the Idylls of Theocritus and others. Pastoral life, in itself, has much of the poetical: but it is difficult to understand why this single phase is to be separated, and in set relief, from the great picture of human life poesy is intended to set before us. On calling to mind those passages in the heroics of the ancients, or in the chivalric poems of the moderns, in which the simple, guileless ease of rural life is contrasted with the restless roving of heroes amid the din and clang of arms, how exquisite the antithesis! The several features appear in mutual connexion and relative proportion, and there results a grand and general picture of life and of the world. The isolation of rustic portraiture from the poetic gallery as one unique whole, tempts the poet to repetition; or, if he would not be tedious, and is ambitious to excel his predecessors, he is forced into exaggeration. It is a singular circumstance that this species of verse in later times of social refinement is most in vogue. Thus poetry frequently expresses that disgust at the refinements of city life which forces us back to Nature and rural scenes. Most idylls betray this their origin, and, ever and anon, reveal some trait that tells us that those shepherds and shepherdesses, who have betaken themselves to the country, and put on the garb of rustics, are city ladies and gentlemen. Theocritus and the bucolic poems of antiquity undoubtedly present us with some genuine eclogues. Yet even they often remind us, by their elegance of diction and artful witticisms, of the seductions of the town and the intrigues of Courts. On the whole, the Idylls of the ancients corresponded with the import of their name: being little poetic pictures, borrowing their subjects sometimes from life, sometimes from mythology, but, generally, of erotic contents.

In this manner, then, poetry became disjointed, and gradually frittered away its resources. Its proportions diminished more and more; till, at last, it dwindled down to miniature groups of buds and flowers, single epigrams and conceits, forming an anthological wreath: or a collection of the neatest and prettiest poetical baubles of every kind.

LECTURE III.

REVIEW.—INFLUENCE OF THE GREEKS OVER THE ROMANS. —SKETCH OF ROMAN LITERATURE.

WHEN the Greeks had ceased to be a nation, their literature daily became less connected with actual life. This was, first and foremost, indicated by their philosophy; its scientific views in antagonism to the vulgar creed, and its lofty ideas, were no longer applicable to the degraded national condition. Historical knowledge was, of course, extended in manifold ways; language and literature were, for the first time, placed on a sure basis, and universally cultivated. But the old grandeur of treatment, the freedom of spirit, were wanting. Oratory still asserted its supremacy in the general estimation, and, more than ever, constituted the principal object of education. If, however, even in the glorious olden times, this art was sometimes employed for the purpose of ingenious sophistry, how much more was this likely to be the case now, when genuine political eloquence had lost its occupation, and national feeling had become extinct even in speech, and degenerated into petty subtleties. Poetry, too, from which the whole of Greek culture had, at first, proceeded, was fast dwindling down to mere mechanical art: it could not escape the general impending doom. The fate of the imitative arts was happier, perhaps, because they are not so immediately dependent on the concerns of daily life. The artist works on, in his studio, after the lofty ideal: though, all around him, political institutions may be shattered, and the aspect of society revolutionized. And, if here, too, the universal corruption of manners and customs was followed by effeminacy, and deterioration of taste, the results were, at least, not so general. It is indisputable that many splendid productions were achieved, both in sculpture and architecture, in times when poetry and oratory were greatly corrupted.

Other sciences, unconnected with public life, and totally independent of the moral condition of a people, continued to exhibit the inventive genius of the Greeks in great perfection and power. In the mathematics, though without many instruments and appliances which, nowadays, we are accustomed to consider indispensable, they laid the foundation of scientific geometry and astronomy: and the true system of the universe, into which the earlier disciples of Pythagoras had partially penetrated, as is supposed, became a subject of general cognizance on the part of their philosophers. The admirable skill of Archimedes astonished and amazed even the Romans: and, notwithstanding the disadvantages attendant on their inconvenient mode of designating numbers by means of letters, and without any knowledge of the decimal system, the Greeks produced a Geometrician, in the person of Euclid, whose works are regarded as classical by the best judges in modern times. Medicine, of yore a favourite study of theirs, now became one of their especial pursuits, and presented wide scope for their penetrating, inventive, and systematizing spirit. It was by means of these acquirements and not by literature alone: as orators and linguists, indeed, but no less so as artists, mathematicians, and physicians, that the Greeks commended themselves to the Romans, when the latter, after having overrun Tarentum, lower Italy, and Sicily, entered the territories of Greece; and they speedily became necessary to the conquerors, however stoutly their influence was at first opposed. On two occasions Greek philosophers and rhetoricians were expelled from Rome by a decree of the senate; and old Cato, an implacable foe to all Greek arts, and the champion of old Roman tastes and feelings, would not tolerate the presence even of their physicians who attended very many Roman families: alleging that they were impostors, who killed, instead of curing, their patients, and recommending that domestic remedies and the wonted means of the good old times should be adopted. How necessary Greek rhetoricians and linguists were to the Romans, may be seen from the repetition of the decree, shewing that the first had not been long regarded. All this is easily explained. At that time the Greek tongue was the common medium of the civilized world. Homer's

poems charmed the inhabitants of furthest Asia: the Indians were, probably, not without some acquaintance with Greek literature: whilst in the remote West, the Carthaginians wrote, in Greek, an account of their voyages of discovery, and Punic Hannibal the history of his wars. After the conquest of Southern Italy, and Sicily, whose inhabitants spoke the Greek idiom, and when Macedonia and Achaia came to be occupied, a familiarity with this universal language became more and more essential to the Romans: especially as the Greeks were in possession of a host of historical works bearing on all those countries and nations with whom the conquerors had now been brought in relation. Romans themselves, who, at this period, began to write the history of their own country, did so in Greek; and Polybius, a Greek who had been taken to Rome as a hostage, was the first to describe to the world at large the character of the conquerors, in a copious work, the political contents of which, at least, were regarded as classical in all succeeding ages. Livius Andronicus, a Greek captive of Tarentum,* acquainted with the Latin tongue, first presented the Odyssey in intelligible, though homely, Italian measure, to the Romans and initiated them by means of translations into the dramatic beauties of the Greeks. But what served to render Greek culture peculiarly agreeable to the upper classes of the Romans and gradually to the nation collectively, was Greek oratory, which was closely combined with instruction in the language itself. In Rome, too, eloquence exercised considerable influence over state affairs, and the more disturbed times grew subsequently to the days of Gracchus, the more ambition stood in need of the assistance of some art like that of sophistry, which, on that very account seemed to the old conservative party dangerous to the state and injurious to thought.

The later intellectual cultivation of the Romans was never entirely able to conceal this feature of its origin: we are

* In reference to this, Niebuhr, in his "Lectures on Roman History," says:—The translation of Greek poetry into the Latin tongue was a step of immense consequence. That Livius Andronicus had been taken prisoner at Tarentum, may be a mistake, as he is perhaps confounded with M. Livius Macatus; Livius Andronicus could at that time have been but a mere child. The accounts of him are very uncertain.—*Translator's note.*

ever accustomed to repeat that the Romans in their literature were mere imitators of the Greeks.

That nations who appear later in the world's history and in the general development of Humanity should receive a large portion of their intellectual culture, as a bequest from those who have preceded them, is inevitable, and, therefore, in itself no reproach. It would be absurd to wish to introduce the exclusive policy of a commercial system into the domains of literature: or, in other words, to expect complete isolation of national development and genius. If national individuality be maintained in full integrity: if, in the pursuit of knowledge, peculiarity of language and of thought be not heedlessly sacrificed to foreign culture, no blame is to be attached to a people seeking to enlarge their stores of literary wealth. Acquirements are, in themselves, the property of every nation; the genius of the poet or instructive writer who would influence his country, is elevated and embellished by gazing on the eminence to which art and reflection, spirit and language, have raised other nations. That kind of imitation alone is dead, which, instead of general, mental expansion, and animation, aims but at foreign forms that are individual and forced, the nature of which is seldom completely applicable to the genius of any other people, and, though vigorous at home, droops when transplanted to a soil not its own.

Roman literature is exposed, in some measure, to two charges: first, that of neglecting to work the mines of traditionary legend: and, also, of futile artificial imitation of foreign forms which, instead of blooming in the native hue of health, drag on, like hot-house plants, a pale and sickly existence in uncongenial climes.

Nevertheless, it possesses a certain character which imparts to it an air of dignity, even when contrasted with Greek culture, its great original and source. It is a characteristic peculiar to the Romans and to Rome, that great central-point of universal history, ancient and modern.

Just as the artist is, or at least should be, animated by some lofty idea which causes him to forget all else, in which he lives and moves, and in the realization of which, his productions, though varied in form and shape, all tend to a common centre: so the genuine poet and inventive

writer is full of some great ideal, peculiar to himself, from which his efforts radiate, and of which the peculiar form of Art in which he strives to represent it, is only the outward expression. This it is that distinguishes the Greeks from the Romans. Recall, for a moment, the great poets of the most flourishing period, Æschylus, Pindar, Sophocles: the patriotic and popular Aristophanes: the orator Demosthenes: the two great historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, or those profound thinkers, Plato and Aristotle. Each one of these has his own peculiar idea, to him all-absorbing, and mirrored in all his productions. Of the two Homeric poems the same may be said, though on the part of their great author, it was more unconscious: being not so much the result of steady purpose, as of very fulness and perfection of the happiest innate intellectual organization. Hence, the above-named writers, severally evince an individual mental process, a peculiar mode of representative art: nay, even their style and language are such as to make one feel like entering a new world. All elements and faculties of advanced civilization are here visible, in happiest combination, in richest purity, in full bloom of perfection, ranged side by side, from the first link to the last, in this chain of classical authors. Whilst in Homer, we see the whole fulness of poetic fancy in the happy heroic age, spread out before us in the clear radiance of the purest light, Aristotle shews us the summit and whole extent of knowledge which the natural reason of antiquity could attain either by force of thought, or scientific enquiry. The great Dramatists express, more especially, the inner moral life, the character of the ancients, the very core of feeling, struggling, as it were, into creative power. On that very account, the whole of their works—with the exception of Sophocles their head, who, both in spirit and form, manifests finished and perfect harmony—are incomparably more individual and local in style and art, and much less calculated to enlist our sympathies or create an active interest in the nature of their qualities, than those two. In Plato, however, we behold the purified Reason on the most intellectual elevation of ancient culture, striving after the higher light of a wondrous manifestation in all the raptures of enthusiasm amid the secrets and symbols of the Divine. Beyond the limited horizon of Greece, he enters into the realms of

supernatural intelligence and of the most ancient traditions, gazing, now Eastward, now with a presentiment of Christianity; thus, the entire circuit of human power is exhausted and described by the imagination and reason, by the character and intellect of these great master-spirits of Humanity.

So rich and manifold was Greek culture, and we seek in vain for similar originality in Roman writers. Yet there is, in them, a compensating quality; not peculiar to any one, but common to all, the paramount idea of Rome. Rome, so wonderful in the severity of her laws and morals, terribly grand even in her errors, and eternally memorable in her universal dominion. This is the spirit that pervades all Roman writings, and gives them a dignity independent of all Greek art and refinement which constituted, too often, the objects of their slavish imitation.

The grandeur and general controlling force of the state, and the mental vigour and boldness of individuals are, in reality, somewhat antithetical, notwithstanding it is a natural as well as reasonable wish to see the union of both in equal parts. But, from the nature of things, it is hardly to be expected that in a State where the one idea of fatherland—its greatness and its fame—affects everything, and leaves no effort untinged with associations of the same, a varied development such as that characteristic of Greece, can exist. It was essential to the blooming prosperity of her genius and art that Athens should enjoy the perfect freedom she did, a freedom, at times, perilous to civil tranquillity. Sparta, the only state that was administered both with virtue and energy, in a word, the only state in all Greece whose political existence was not one of fleeting prosperity, but calculated to be permanent as well as sound, purchased this superiority at the price of a limited range of thought, manners, and genius, both in philosophy and poetry.

Let me apply this observation to individuals: have not Cæsar and Cicero something which places them before the rhetoricians, grammarians, philosophers, and sophists, to whom they are indebted as regards the graces of language, and oratory, and mode of thought, and to whom they are vastly inferior in acuteness and scientific knowledge? Every one will feel that in the works of these two writers, as in those of all great Romans, there breathes a spirit differing

widely from the degeneracy of later Greek sophistry. It is not genius or individual intellect, but the absorbing idea of their country, of Rome unique in the world's history, which animates them throughout, and like the invisible spirit of life, imparts a glow to every page of their writings.

To assert that the Romans owed all their culture to the Greeks, and that they had, at no time, been in possession of original sources of information, is so little founded on fact, that the powerful influence exercised over the old heroic legends and poesy of Rome, by close contact with Grecian literature, was the very means of well nigh obliterating such vestiges as still remained. Many writers, particularly familiar with early Roman usages, occasionally hint at old songs celebrating the deeds of a glorious past, which were sung at public entertainments, and at the tables of the wealthy. In historical epics, then, lay enshrined the patriotism and poetic genius of the Romans, before they were tutored by the Greeks in sophistic oratory, and a more elaborate and regular prosody. If it be asked of what the contents of these old epics could have consisted, history, at once, furnishes a reply. Not only the fabulous birth and adventures of Romulus, the rape of the Sabine women, but likewise the traditionary combat of the three Horatii and Curiatii, the arrogance of Tarquin, the misfortune and death of Lucretia, with their revenge and the restoration of liberty by Brutus: the wondrous war of Porsena, the banishment of Coriolanus, his warlike preparations against his birth place, and how, when his heroic heart beat with inward dissension, the presence of his mother, and the thoughts of Rome, overcame his wavering purpose. All these professed histories, when examined from a right point of view, at once approve themselves to the enquirer to be genuine old Roman epics and fictions, and, as such, are of very great value; though it may be difficult for the historical critic, if they are judged by a severe standard, to reconcile the numerous internal inconsistencies they contain. It had been frequently conjectured that much, which, in reality, belonged to these early lays, had been falsely incorporated into history, and that Livy, especially, had embodied the essence of their story in his glowing page. But it was reserved for the acumen of a learned critic* of our own day to winnow,

* See Niebuhr's Roman History.

with diligent and careful hand, the substantial from the seeming, and he has accomplished his task with singular success. Thus, on the one hand, criticism deprives us of a portion of history that had, for ages, passed current on credit, and, yet, must ever have appeared vexatious, ambiguous, unsatisfactory; whilst, on the other hand, we gain, at least, a feeble echo of the genuine Roman legends. Those historical hero-adventures, before Greek verse and artificiality had weaned the Roman ear from the melody of native song, were wont to be chanted in simple strains, called Saturnine, in Italy, as a reminiscence of the olden time, and which, with the single exception of rhyme—which they had not—were not unlike the irregular Alexandrines, employed by almost all Europe in the middle ages.

The contents of these old heroic songs, whilst, here and there, lofty traits were exhibited, if we may judge from what is yet extant in the shape of ostensible history, were, for the most part, of a patriotic character, strictly confined to the praises of the native town: and, in spite of occasional admixture of the fabulous and wonderful, approaching in genius and character to the historical.

Thus, then, it is not difficult to comprehend that the fascinating variety of the Odyssey, and the euphonious sweetness of Greek hexameters so completely captivated the Roman soul and ear as to alienate them from their native traditionary lays.

There was yet another cause that weaned the Romans from their old heroic legends, and brought these latter so far into oblivion as to reduce them to the mutilated form of semi-fabulous and incoherent chronicles: it lay in Rome's own history and the subsequent condition of the world generally. The last heroic figure of early Roman history, appertaining in great measure, to tradition and poetry, and, unquestionably, handed down in song, is that of Camillus, liberating Rome from the conquering Gauls. The historical period of Rome dates from this liberation. Amid the devastation of the Gauls, memorials of every kind probably perished: all antecedent to this time is vague and dubious, or if any individual fact stands out in relief, it is, at all events, interspersed with fabulous matter. Then commenced the real greatness of Rome, first developed in the Samnite war. Historically speaking, this is indeed the heroic age of the Roman people,

when, most probably, were composed the epics mentioned by Cato and Cicero, and present to the eye of Ennius, and even of Livy. To this historically heroic time of Roman energy and virtue, the ancient lays of kings, heroes, and liberators, as well as of events connected with the immortal City, were still near enough to be sensibly felt. But when Tarentum, Italy and Sicily, Macedon and Carthage, Spain and Achaia, fell under the yoke, what connexion was there between the insignificance of early Rome that made warfare against the Sabines, or like the Greeks before Troy, beleaguered Veii for ten long years —and the Rome that was pressing onward, irresistibly, to her destiny of universal dominion. In the remotest times, the Greeks were a numerous people, branching out into different tribes and races. Rome, originally a single town, had, by incorporating several of the states of Italy, attained to a certain importance, and, eventually, became an empire before which a subjugated world lay prostrate.

It was, then, a result of inevitable circumstances, that the native legends of Rome evermore retreated into dim obscurity, and were never suffered to unfold its beauties or receive further embellishment, but in due time were superseded by Grecian genius and art. Ennius alone should not be made to bear the blame for all this—of whom the learned Critic, already alluded to, says, that he considered himself the first of Roman poets, for having rooted out the old national minstrelsy. It may easily be supposed that he, who in his simplicity fancied he had three souls because he knew three languages, Latin, Greek, and Oscan, or old Italian, was not a little proud at having been the first to imitate the Greek hexameter, though rudely enough. The genuine poet is not always exempt from vanity of this sort, frequently laying too great a stress on an external, perhaps ill-selected, or not altogether successful, form, merely because it has cost him pains and exertion: whilst he sets no value on the genius that awakens our admiration, which, as he owes it exclusively to nature, he never thinks of comparing with others. But Ennius directed many of his efforts in the newly invented art to the subjects of those ancestral lays, and some of his verses, still extant, breathe a lofty tone of poetic sentiment. We are, further, induced to think favourably of him, from the admiration in which he was held by Lucretius:

that is, if we may suppose this admiration to have been founded on a kindred spirit and resemblance in elevation of thought and power of expression.

The arts and methods of Greece made their way into Rome incessantly, but with varying results. Of all these, history and eloquence were most congenial to the Romans, and those which they were most successful in applying to their own institutions. Philosophy was the most foreign to their tastes, and in poetry, success varied with the different kinds adopted.

Dramatic poetry was the first that the Romans sought to practise after the time of Ennius: but their labours resulted in bald translations, devoid of fidelity and care, and undeserving of the name of *imitations*. This holds good of the lost tragedies of Pacuvius and Atticus, as well as the comedies of Plautus and Terence which have come down to us. Domestic farce, the so-called Atellan plays, in Oscan idiom, survived only in the form of social entertainments in the private houses of the wealthy classes who, amid encroachments of foreign refinement, loved thus to dwell, at times, on the reminiscences of old Italian nationality. Much the same as, in our own day, a peculiar relish for Bardic song and popular comedy contrasts with a high degree of mental culture. On so slender a foundation it was scarcely possible to erect the superstructure of a national drama: at any rate, we have no reason to suppose that any such superstructure was actually raised. With regard to the translations that were made from Greek tragedy: whilst Roman mythology, as a whole, was originally near akin to that of Greece, yet, individually, there was much local difference. Iphigenia, Œdipus, Prometheus, the Atridæ, the calamities that befel the Theban Brothers, all appeared, more or less, strange to the Romans, and contrary to the spirit of their manners: like an exotic, doomed, after a feeble struggle for existence, to wither and die off. A few tragedies of Roman poets in the reign of Augustus, which have been extolled as excellent of their kind, prove the scantiness of the species. Whilst the dramatic declamations generally attributed to Seneca, demonstrate how early Roman tragic compositions ended. The exhibition of Athenian manners in farce could not but appear stiff and lifeless to a Roman spectator. This satisfactorily accounts for the way in which the allurements of

Pantomime and the graces of the dance eventually supplanted every other kind of scenic spectacle.

Must not susceptibility of tragic feeling and intellectual sympathy have been blunted by gladiatorial shows, and combats, in which, sometimes, hundreds of lions or elephants were killed in the presence of an applauding assembly? In the several attempts which the Romans made to establish native tragedy, it is strange that they seldom, if ever, drew their subjects from their own legends. This is the more singular that the moderns have frequently selected, for Tragedy, such themes as the combat of the Horatii, the deed of Brutus, or the self-conquest and altered resolve of Coriolanus—in themselves highly poetical and not undramatic—and have thus, as it were, restored her own to poetry. The peculiar character of these historical tales supplies us with satisfactory reasons for this seeming singularity. The patriotic feeling embodied in them was far too near that age, in point of time, to admit of dramatic effect. Of this the history of Coriolanus affords abundant proof. How could a Roman poet have, faithfully, delineated this patrician in the whole extent of his original arrogance towards plebeians—at a period when the Gracchi sought to free the Roman people from this very same patrician hauteur? How could the banished Coriolanus have been introduced on the Roman stage, as, in bitter mood, he vents on his country reproaches not altogether undeserved—at a time when Sertorius, the noblest and boldest of the later Romans, living in banishment among the unconquered Lusitanians and Spaniards, was planning there the deliverance of his country and the founding of a new Rome? With what feelings would Coriolanus—advancing at the head of a victorious army upon his native city—have been received by a Roman audience at the moment when Sylla was actually on his march with an armed force for the self-same purpose? Again, in subsequent times, were not all these occurrences fresh, and, as though, present to the then living generation? Not merely in this history, but throughout, the contests of patricians with plebeians were too marked, too closely interwoven with the web of Roman legendary story, to be suitable to republican times. And for the Augustan age, Brutus, and similar worthies, were equally unfit. Let me adduce an instance

in point, from the modern drama. In his historical plays, Shakespere introduces the sanguinary feuds that embroiled the Houses of York and Lancaster, but when he wrote. those feuds were completely at an end. The civil wars of Germany especially, the one which, with more or less violence, convulsed the country for a period of thirty years, offer copious and attractive themes for the German dramatist's treatment on our own stage: but here the case is not fully the same as with the Romans. And yet, the German poet, if he would do justice to his subject, has a difficult task in hand, and must proceed cautiously, in order not to irritate party feeling, or tear open afresh old wounds that had partially healed up, and thus destroy poetic effect.

For these reasons, the Romans had no tragedy of their own, and indeed no distinguished stage.

Of the poets who employed the other forms of the art, Lucretius, the earliest, stands alone in Roman literature, both as to genius and manner. He alone can, in some measure, afford us a specimen of the style and strain of the older Roman poesy: he was but little understood or appreciated by his countrymen in subsequent times. His work, on the nature of things, in its method, resembles the scientific didactic form, which originated with the Greeks, and was still in vogue among them. The philosophy Lucretius had adopted was the worst that a Roman poet could have selected, that of Epicurus, which, whilst destroying all belief and all the nobler feelings, and, in a scientific point of view, abounding with the strangest hypotheses, was, if not positively immoral, at least unnational, and selfish in its tendencies and influence on life, as well as fatal to imagination and poetry generally. Yet all these difficulties were overcome, and it is with poignant regret that we contemplate his noble spirit given over to the deadly system of Greek sophistry. In sublime enthusiasm he holds the first place among Roman poets: as nature's own minstrel, he surpasses all the bards of antiquity. In reference to this kind of poetry, and the position that nature ought to occupy in poetic representation, I would here make a few observations of general application.

It is, unquestionably, the business of poetry to make not only man, but also surrounding nature the object of her representation, or her enthusiasm. In this instance, as in

that of man, a threefold distinction obtains. The poetic treatment of man as its element and subject may be, first, a bright mirror of actual life, and of the present: second, the recollection of a glorious, heroic, past, and—where poetry would animate and inspire, rather than describe—the arousing of the deeper hidden feelings of humanity. All this may be applied to nature. Poetry is intended to present us with a picture of the collective external manifestations of nature; to this end serves all that spring produces, of animating and quickening influence, the noblest portions of the animal kingdom in form and habits, the loveliest in the world of plants and flowers, whatever in the external changes that take place in the heavens or on the earth appears sublime or important to the eye of man. The difficulty is to avoid excess: copious descriptions, even when, in the main, they are true, grow tedious and miss their aim. But single flowers plucked here and there from the lap of bounteous nature, and tastefully inserted in the wreath of poesy, constitutes an ornament both elegant and chaste. Nature, too, has her wondrous past: when she was irregular and gigantic in her proportions, like the race of man in the heroic ages. We are impressed with such a feeling, on beholding some dreary and savage waste, where rocks and hills are confusedly heaped together like the ruins of a former world. All the legends of antiquity confirm us in this view of an old Tellurian period; unusual appearances, storms, lightnings, floods, and earthquakes, partially transplant us to that wild state of nature. All these are fitting subjects for a great poet, and it is in depicting similar ones that Lucretius shews himself to be a glorious painter of nature. Yet here, too, the poet requires only what is general, the assumption of a wild free state of things, a past age of sublimity and grandeur as a theatre for nature's wonders. A technical and scientific view, namely, whether some extensive mountain ridge is the result of volcanic action or of water, is equally unsuited to the purposes of poetry with the doctrine of the atomic system, which even the fancy of Lucretius was not able to invest with poetic charms. The third medium whereby the poet comes in contact with nature, is through the feelings. Not only in the warble of the nightingale, or whatsoever else in woodland melody delights every one, but

also in the murmur of the stream or of the woods, we think we hear a kindred voice, of joy or sadness; as though spirits and sensibilities akin to our own would fain rush to to us from afar, or from the narrow limits that separate them, to hold communion with us. To listen to these tones, to feel them inwardly, to read nature's very soul, the poet retires into solitude. The enquirer's doubts, whether the soul of nature be really thus animated, or whether it be a mere delusion, affect him not; enough, that this feeling, this presentiment, lives in the imagination and the bosom of humanity and poesy; and if the eye could lift creation's veil, and see the spirits of nature at work in their hidden laboratory, the genuine poet would still be reluctant, even if he were able, to remove, entirely, the beneficent veil. Of this view of nature, so mysterious and rich in sentiment, few, if any, traces are to be found in Greek and Roman poets, whilst they abound in the old northern bards, who lived in constant sympathy with nature. These natural descriptions and fancies should not, however, be isolated, in poetry, from the contemplation of man, of whom they constitute the choicest ornament. If they are, the picture of the world, painted by poetry, loses some portion of its completeness as a whole, general harmony is disturbed, and the effect marred. Therefore, the form, which treats of nature scientifically, after the manner of Lucretius, is, in reality, a mistaken one, and, like his philosophy, objectionable: yet he challenges our sympathies as a man, and as a poet fills us with the highest admiration.

The great Roman writers will be most conveniently considered in the order of their respective periods. The last days of the Republic witnessed a less finished development of diction, but were, otherwise, richer, in a literary point of view, than the Augustan age. As an orator, Cicero is marked by sufficient variety and practice in his art: the magnitude of his subjects, and the position he occupies in the history of the world, invest his orations with a high degree of dignity. Yet, it is difficult to understand how a style so redundant in expression as his could have been regarded as a pattern of good writing. Of his contemporaries, there were some who censured his tendency to Asiatic pomposity. The greatest service he rendered to the literary culture of his country

was his introduction of the higher moral philosophy of the Greeks. For the more abstruse speculations, in whose mazes the spirit of the Greeks loved to wander, and in which they displayed an infinity of art, Cicero had as little inclination or faculty as any other Roman. But as a fond lover of philosophy, whose society he courted, for solace, in the hour of misfortune, or for the retirement of lettered ease, when weary of the noisy din and bustle of public business, he made a happy and judicious selection. He attached himself to the tenets of Plato, as most favourable to a general and beautiful mental culture, and recognized by collective antiquity as the very acme of perfection in genius and language. But, as Plato's later successors—at whose hands the Romans, directly, received these doctrines—had become thoroughly sceptical, inasmuch as their great master had practised philosophy only as an art, without reducing it to a system, Cicero often betook himself, for practical advice and information, to the maxims of the Stoics: and where the stubbornness that characterized this school, was not congenial to his views, he had recourse to Aristotle, who is, in all things, fond of the middle path, and who, in morals, constitutes the felicitous medium between Stoic severity and Epicurean apathy. To the latter he was decidedly averse, nor unjustly so. It must not, indeed, be presumed that all those who, in antiquity, agreed with Epicurus so far as to consider the pursuit of pleasure the highest and final aim of life, likewise accepted or acted upon the various objectionable inferences that may be legitimately drawn from his principles. Yet, whilst there were, unquestionably, various modifications and constructions of these doctrines, some holding, with Aristippus, that pleasure consisted of sensual gratifications, others that it meant a placid and painless condition of inward satisfaction, which the better Epicureans as well as other Greek philosophers sought for chiefly in mental exercise and intercourse with congenial friends, all concurred in this particular: that a total secession from public and civil business constituted a fundamental principle of a wisely regulated mode of life. In their effect on daily practice, these doctrines were, eminently, selfish and unnational, and having, at the first, had many adherents at Rome, they contributed not a little to its corruption.

Cicero, a foe to Epicurus and his system, is, on the other hand, a thoroughly patriotic thinker. Hence his philosophy has often been the delight of statesmen, who, without any inborn taste, or leisure, for speculation, yet were glad to devote their moments of leisure to contemplation.

In form and diction Cicero is extremely unequal: a feature frequently observable in Roman writers, since they were not always successful in making their own mental efforts harmonize completely, with what they borrowed from the Greeks.

Cæsar is the first in whom we find perfect evenness of expression. When he handled the pen, he was guided by the self-same principles as when he wielded the sword: directing his attention uninterruptedly to one sole object, and to it making all else subservient. He is in complete possession of the qualities next only to liveliness in historic writing—clearness and simplicity. But how strikingly does the lucid brevity of Cæsar, hastening to attain its object, and treating all else as superfluous, differ from the diffuse, Homer-like garrulity and transparency of Herodotus! As a general arranges his forces, with the greatest economy of strength consistent with safety, and makes the most of every advantage he may have over the enemy, so, Cæsar musters his words, and marshals his sentences with consummate skill and care; and just as inexorably did he pursue the advantage that victory gave him on the battle field. Of all those who have recorded their own exploits, notwithstanding his Attic grace, Xenophon is too inferior a politician or a general to be compared with Cæsar. We are not in a position to criticise the literary merits of annals penned by some of Alexander's captains, or by Hannibal, for they have not reached us. As a writer, then, the Roman when judged by the productions of others, under similar circumstances, is still Cæsar, the invincible.

In description of character, and as an historical painter generally, Sallust is truly grand: but his style is not quite so even, so clear, or always so apt as that of Cæsar. There is an occasional forced stiffness, with an affectation of quaintness. Even in history, the form of which, as it originated in the Greek Republics, might seem peculiarly adapted to Roman genius, imitation of some special model—in this case Thucydides—was not without injurious consequences.

This first flourishing period of Roman intellect and oratory clearly demonstrates how great an advantage it is to literature to command the sympathies and active co-operation of leading public men. Their very position enables them to take a general oversight of the whole, and to consider literary matters in their most extensive relations. This was one circumstance that imparted a peculiar grandeur to Roman literature. On the commencement of a new order of things after the death of Brutus, a spirit altogether novel pervaded the literature of the Augustan age. The free action of eloquence was manacled: on the other hand, men's minds turned once more to poetry, whose voice could find no general sympathy amidst the din and bloodshed of the Civil Wars. But now, as if to inaugurate the return of peace and the happy sway of Augustus, the advent of a national poetry embodying patriotic sentiment in classic diction, was eagerly looked for, to contribute her embellishments to the general splendour. To accomplish this, not only Virgil, but Propertius and Horace, too, were encouraged, nay, earnestly solicited by the first men in the state to attune their lyre. On account of his artistic style, Propertius was well qualified to be an epic poet; but he wanted to be free, and lived entirely as his own genius led him, passionately devoted to the feelings of generous friendship and ardent love, with which his whole soul was animated, and his fervent song distinguished above all other Roman bards. Of the poets that have come down to us entire, Horace possessed perhaps the greatest share of heroic grandeur. He was a patriot who locked up within his bosom the pangs he felt at Republican decline, mingling, in order to alleviate his pain, in life's gayest scenes, and poetizing. At every opportunity, his patriotic enthusiasm and aspiration after freedom, peer from beneath the smiles of assumed gaiety. He dared not undertake a long poem, founded on some traditionary legend of his country's infancy, without risking the betrayal of sentiments that would have been unseasonable, and no less unpalatable. He, therefore, could not respond to their reiterated appeals.

Peaceful, artistic, tender Virgil was most especially fitted owing to his love of nature and of rural life, to become the national poet of the Romans. The old Roman, as indeed the old Italian, mode of life, generally, was altogether

founded on agriculture and country life; whilst the Greeks were, for the most part, a community of traders, navigators, and merchants. Even the most distinguished and eminent Romans in the good old time, lived in conformity with the simple habits and tastes of rural life, and, in spite of the corruption of the metropolis, remnants of sound and vigorous moral feeling, the usual concomitants of agricultural pursuits, were far from being destroyed in the rest of Italy. This point had to be borne in mind by the bard who aspired to the dignity of becoming the national poet of his country, and who intended not to confine his sphere of action within metropolitan limits. Virgil's fondness for nature and for rustic life is sufficiently manifest in his Eclogues, the production of his youth, whilst he has shewn his matured master-spirit in his more finished poem, the Georgics. Would that he had not framed his admirable lays, which are altogether so fitted to the now peaceful Rome and which breathe the genuine old Italian spirit, in the foreign, didactic form of Alexandrine verse; and that he had incorporated his views of nature and of agriculture in his great Epic dedicated to the glorious reminiscences of his country, and thus bequeathed to us a complete and comprehensive picture of old Italian manners! It would have been the means of effectually reviving native heroic tradition, and of securing for it a firm and permanent footing. But then he would have had to sketch his Epic in bolder outlines, and with a looser connection. In the circumscribed arrangement he has adopted, the latter Italian portion of his poem presents a striking contrast to the first half, in which he was enabled to interweave the origin of Rome, so happily, with the magnificent legends of Troy. Nevertheless, the Æneid, which the poet left unfinished, and considered so unsatisfactory as to desire its annihilation, has justly remained the real national poem of the Romans. If we judged by the soaring flight of enthusiasm alone, or happy facility of innate genius, we might perhaps be inclined to award the superiority to Lucretius and Ovid: but Virgil's especial excellence lies in the national feeling which he most thoroughly expresses. To complete perfection the Æneid cannot, indeed, lay claim: for we miss in it that symmetry which is wanting in most of the Roman poets, owing to the con-

flict between native power and acquired art. In Virgil, the deficiency appears in representation and language, but most of all in the arrangement of the whole.

This inequality is still more apparent in the style of Horace, and the other lyric poets. Among various nations, the epic is the form that differs least, though it is not to be denied that Homeric imitation cramped and misled both Virgil and many after him. But, independently of form, the process of mixing the heroic legends of one people with those of another is comparatively easy, since there is so much akin in the varied mythology of nations, though separated ever so widely. The explanation of this is twofold: either the universal condition of humanity in primitive times of youthful and elastic vigour is much the same in many particulars; or that the accordance, sometimes extremely singular, evidences the common origin of man, especially as regards the allegorical symbols employed in this kind of poetry. The legendary epics of all races have many points of contact, and every where vibrate in accordant tones of mutual sympathy: though it were difficult to restore the lost thread of connexion, and, not merely to demonstrate critically how all the great legends of the ancient world sprang from one common source, but, likewise to combine the whole in poetry and inform them with fresh life. For the purposes of serious dramatic poetry, an acquaintance with the degree of elevation attained in art by other nations, may serve, on the whole, to guide us in determining how far our aspirations may tend, and what constitutes the boundary of human possibility. Yet, mere form is not to be the object of imitation: if the stage is to be attended with general beneficial results, it should be founded on national lore, historical or legendary, and be proportioned to the habits, character, and thoughts of the people for whom it is specially composed.

Of all imitated forms, the lyric is peculiarly hurtful and objectionable. For what greater value or attraction can a lyric poem have than that of being a free outburst of genuine feeling? On the other hand, what is there that can compensate for the absence of this charm, when a spurious warmth is simulated, and where art completely usurps the place of nature? In Roman poets, the very passages that

have been borrowed, and those that are native, can be respectively distinguished. Notwithstanding this inequality, Horace stirs our sympathies more than any other Roman poet, as a man. He rises highest in those portions of his works, in which he addresses to us the actual language of Romans, recalling the olden splendour, invoking Regulus the noble patriot, and citing others who, in his own forcible words, were "prodigal of their great souls."

In the only species of poetry which the Romans created for themselves, in satire, Horace is, by far, the most spirited writer. This species, distinct in form from the common ludicrous lyric poetry, and couched in epic verse of greater licence, is purely Roman in its spirit and contents. Throughout, it treats of the social relations of the metropolis, introduces the current jests of the day, and alludes to the moral corruption that flowed into Rome from half the globe. A poetic picture of real life can only be furnished us by means of the Drama, when in a high state of perfection: but individual traits, in however spirited a manner they may be drawn, cannot constitute dramatic painting. Hence Roman satire, conceived in the master-spirit of Horace himself, is, at the most, a substitute for Comedy, which the Romans may be said never to have actually possessed: at least, no native power of their own that ever ripened into full development. And even when the enthusiasm of satire rises to the pitch of magnificent invective against vice and folly, as in Juvenal, such enthusiasm may be morally worthy of admiration, but, after all, it is not poetry.

Prose attained to a much higher pitch of elevation, than poetry, among the Romans: Livy may be considered to have been almost perfect as to language, and the rhetorical form of History, peculiar to the ancients, received from his hand whatsoever it still lacked of artistic elegance.

The first half of the long reign of Augustus should be looked upon as the harvest-time of intellectual products that had been ripening ever since the latter days of the Republic, when political grandeur was no mere abstraction, and when the genius of freedom walked abroad.

The younger generation, born, or, at least, bred, under the Monarchy, bore the impress of a different character. So early as the end of Augustus' reign, symptoms of declin-

ing taste made their appearance, and, first, in the imaginative conceits and effeminate diction of Ovid.

The rapid deterioration of History, in which the Romans excelled, under the fearful tyranny of the later Cæsars, is amply evidenced by the mannerism of Velleius Paterculus, not to speak of his despicable flattery. Seneca, the philosopher, originated a sententious and highly affected style of composition. In proportion as despotism increased in rigorous harshness, those who still resisted it in spirit, attached themselves more closely to the tenets of Stoicism, the genius of which could not but be acceptable to the proud independent spirit that was surrounded, on all sides, by mean servility and fawning sycophancy. Pomposity, extravagance, and affectation are not unfrequently found in the train of political and social coercion. In Lucan, they are strangely coupled with pretentious republican enthusiasm: our surprise is mingled with contempt when we find the same poet lauding Nero in terms of almost criminal adulation, and in the same breath impiously exalting Cato above the gods! As though not utterly renouncing the associations of her childhood, Roman poetry returns, in Lucan, to the form of the historical epic. Considered on its own merits, any great historical event may justly furnish matter for an epic: how remote, or how near, chronologically, signifies very little, so that its inward constitution be suitable. To this end, feeling, enthusiasm, fancy, should have greater scope afforded for their exercise than mere arrangement of plan, or order of proceeding. Thus, in the instance of Alexander, whose life and deeds, such as the fall of Darius, and the Indian expedition, might have furnished ample materials for poetic requirements, had any poet lived, at that period, capable of celebrating them worthily. The civil war of Cæsar and Pompey, a contest between opposite faction and policy, has, indeed, furnished many themes of dramatic representation in modern times, yet, no amount of genius or art could have availed to mould these into epic form. The picture of the taste of this age is completed by mentioning the obscurity of Persius, and the forced style of the elder Pliny; though the works of this last writer are so far valuable that they testify what the Romans might have contributed to the extension of human knowledge, had they oftener chosen to ap-

ply the means which unbounded rule placed at their command.

Better times succeeded, and, once more, a Roman of the grand ancient model swayed the civilized world on the throne of Augustus. As Trajan is the last of the Cæsars whose intellect reached the standard of true Roman greatness, so Tacitus, who, as a writer, is entitled to a similar meed of approbation, closes the list of Roman authors of the first distinction. He began life under Vespasian and Titus,—the first good emperors after Nero—in Domitian's reign he had learnt to observe and be silent, and under Nerva he anticipated the splendour that was destined in Trajan's time, to illumine Rome with brilliant though setting glories.

The profundity of his genius, and his peculiar expression so suitable to its conveyance, are more distinctly apparent, from the numerous failures of those, who, in vain, have sought to imitate him. His expression is, indeed, faultless, though the language at his command cannot be supposed to have been as grand as when Cæsar wrote, or as artistic as the materials of Livy. In this glorious trio, the language appears to me to have attained the climax of its respective purity and eminence: in Cæsar, unadorned simplicity and grandeur; in Livy, rhetorical splendour, of beautiful natural proportions; in Tacitus, profound artistic strength, invested with the dignity of ancient Rome.

LECTURE IV.

BRIEF DURATION OF ROMAN LITERATURE.—NEW EPOCH UNDER HADRIAN.—INFLUENCE OF ORIENTAL THOUGHT OVER THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE WEST.—MOSAIC RECORDS, HEBREW POESY.—THE PERSIAN RELIGION.—IDEA OF THE BIBLE, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE exotic character of literature and philosophy as Roman products, is seen from the paucity of Latin authors contrasted with the rich collection of Grecian genius, as

also from the, comparatively, short period during which Roman art and culture flourished.

As regards translations from the Greek tongue, or individual poets and original writers, Rome could boast of some of these ever since the days when the Scipios patronized the literature and rhetoric of the Greeks; when the elder Cato made the history, manners, and language, of his ancestors the objects of his investigation, in order to maintain the integrity of Roman thought against the encroachments of Grecian innovation: and when Ennius partially applied Greek art and versification to Roman themes, and instituted the older school of Roman poetry. But if, by flourishing literature, we mean something more than a disjointed fragmentary series of ill-assorted efforts: if we expect a certain connection and unity in all its parts, a fixed and regular meaning attached to words, especially in prose, a continuous transmission and extension of acquirements affecting language, rhetoric, and intellectual culture generally; in that case, Roman literature cannot strictly date before the time of Cicero, who took a prominent, nay, the leading part, in its establishment. Until his day, all rhetorical instruction was thoroughly Greek, being conveyed by means of Greek books and in the Greek language.* It was he who promoted public scientific teaching by means of the Latin tongue, which he so successfully employed for philosophical purposes and for the theory of eloquence. Through him the language was both extended in its application and fixed in certain limits and definite boundaries, to which the grammatical writings of Cæsar and Varro also greatly contributed. Next to Cicero, these two claim the distinction of having erected the solid structure of genuine Roman literature, Cæsar by his furthering the interests of learning by his oratory, and by his exertions to disseminate a scientific knowledge of the language of which he was himself so great a master, fashioning it in well-defined proportions and thus materially augmenting its power. Varro assisted, in the capacity of a learned collector of valuable works, and an accurate enquirer into the anti-

* It will be remembered that Cicero sent his own son, Marcus, to Athens, to study under Cratippus. See his "De Officiis," Lib. I. cap. 1 — *Translator's note.*

quities of his country, in making that the actual period of flourishing Roman literature.* The most remarkable writers previous to Trajan, have been briefly considered in the preceding remarks. The last work of any note produced in this flourishing age of Roman intellect is the panegyric of the younger Pliny on Trajan. A worthy subject for the final effort of declining eloquence, an art in which the incompetence of Pliny's feeble imitators was as conspicuous as the imbecility of Trajan's successors in the purple.

The classic period of Roman literature, reckoning from the Consulate of Cicero to the death of Trajan, did not, then, exceed one hundred and eighty years. That time is, likewise, distinguished for the first scientific development of practical jurisprudence, peculiar to the Romans, and in which they displayed great ability and skill. Cicero and Cæsar were the first to conceive the design of collecting and arranging the immense mass of Roman statutory laws; in the reign of Augustus two classes of jurists prevailed, the one inclining to a mild and merciful, the other to a strictly literal and severe interpretation of the law; under Hadrian the establishment of a complete legal digest, called the Perpetual Edict, furnished the very remedy that Cicero and Cæsar had contemplated.

Hadrian inaugurates an epoch altogether new, not only as concerns the principles of government, but also mental cultivation. The language and literature of Greece gradually reasserted their natural rights, and extended their intellectual sway over the civilized world which was now politically one under the Emperors of Rome.

Whilst Roman writers of any importance rapidly decreased after Trajan, and even these, when contrasted with their predecessors, appear to lose what little merit they may have seemed to possess, till, at last, the list of these, too, grows extinct: a new life stirred in Greek literature and philosophy, a general mental activity, a rich after-crop of Grecian genius, frequently not unworthy, both in descrip-

* Having, in his youth, been Admiral of the Greek fleet in the piratical war, Varro was subsequently appointed by Cæsar to be his librarian, where he had ample means of cultivating his literary tastes. He shared Cicero's banishment, but was recalled by Augustus.—*Translator's note.*

tive power and in language, of the palmy days of its literature, but certainly every way superior to the age that immediately preceded. It is true that no further efforts of the muse rose above humble mediocrity: but philosophy and rhetoric were all the more zealously cultivated, and instead of being separated and opposed, as in old Attic times, they were blended together in ever increasing harmony. The Socratic mode of philosophizing, as in Plato's dialogues, was no longer acceptable, either in design or expression: manners, and, indeed, all the arrangements of life assumed by that method, were altogether too foreign to the prevalent social taste. The scientific severity of Aristotle was suited only to very few. In their stead arose a new rhetorical treatment of scientific subjects, which flourished in full vigour, from the time of Hadrian and the Antonines, to that of the emperor Julian, and produced some excellent writers. Another instance is afforded, if proof were wanting, of the truth of the remark, that whilst there were some periods in which Greek poetry attained to a high degree of inventive genius and grandeur, and others that were totally unfavourable to its growth, rhetoric, an art which the Greeks made peculiarly their own, flourished during all vicissitudes of time and circumstance, and disappeared only for a season to emerge with increased splendour.

Of the great mass of writers of this latter period of ancient Greek literature, serving, as a whole, principally in an historical point of view to indicate particular sources of information, or, in some measure, to compensate for the loss of more important names, there are, nevertheless, a few, possessing some intrinsic merit. At the head of these is Plutarch, whose *Lives*, in spite of considerable errors of style and judgment, are, yet, replete with genuine treasures of moral precept, the value of which time has not availed to diminish. His style is overcharged, and sometimes confused. The copious remarks of his own that he has interspersed throughout the memoirs of his heroes, require to be carefully sifted: now and then there are some neither pointed nor appropriate. Throughout the whole, however, the noblest integrity of feeling reigns, and a full acquaintance is manifested with all the moral masterpieces of classic antiquity, well-digested, and animated by the purest spirit.

That style, as an art, was not completely extinct, and that Attic wit still lived, we have satisfactory evidence in Lucian. As a spirited writer in the mixed species of philosophical satire, he has few equals, and is inestimable as a delineator of the manners of the age. In his history, Arrian, generally reckoned the best biographer of Alexander, deserves comparison with Xenophon for beautiful simplicity. Marcus Aurelius, the last of the eminent and virtuous Cæsars, occupies too honourable a position in the history of humanity, not to deserve to be recorded for his literary merits also: he composed, in Greek, a series of Stoic self-contemplative observations of considerable worth. Whilst Herodian sketched the history of the unworthy successors of Aurelius, in a manner scarcely to be expected at this period.

Greek philosophers of various sects were invited by Antoninus Pius, in great numbers, to undertake tutorial posts, and this important class of men were regularly, so to speak, taken into the service of the state. It was now expected of Stoic philosophy to prop and support the tottering creed of the people. Lucian forcibly reminds us of the decay of this old belief in the gods and in general mythology, of the prevalence of scepticism, free thinking, and infidelity, throughout the whole Roman world; whilst the fact that Sextus Empiricus, the most copious writer of the sceptical school, is contemporary with this age, is a strong presumption of the universal ferment, and newly aroused activity of the exploring philosophical mind. Again, Lucian, in his witty picture of the times, proves the general tendency there was to fanaticism, the superstition of science gradually supplanting the olden poetic credulity; belief in astrology and an inclination to magic arts being sown broadcast, by means of many secret societies, and also publicly taught in writings, and, orally, by philosophers. The influence of oriental modes of thought, theories of the universe, and demonology, introducing together with the pure sources of truth, likewise streams of deeper and more fervid fanaticism than the younger and colder philosophy of the West could conceive or devise, spread further and further. Even in architecture, as renewed under Hadrian, the predominant Egyptian taste shewed an evident leaning to orientalism. Plutarch, though following Plato, exhibits Platonic philosophy in a later form, when it began to embody all that

yet remained of the doctrine of Pythagoras, or, at least, that passed by the name of Pythagorean, of Egyptian origin, —and to approximate nearer to old oriental tradition, from which Plato himself is supposed to have drawn some of his views.

This new Platonic philosophy soon became dominant: the other sects, namely, the Sceptic, Epicurean, and even the Stoic lost their individuality. Yet many Stoic tenets entered as elements into this *one* comprehensive philosophy of the Greeks, which, from its principal component, received the name of New-Platonic. It was this system which long assailed Christianity with the utmost energy of intellect, and, under the Emperor Julian, hoped to be successful in defeating it, and to place the old popular belief on a firmer basis, and to renovate it by giving it a more spiritual meaning.

This struggle between Christianity on the one hand and heathen philosophy on the other, old polytheism and the new creed, poetical mythology and a Religion of Morality, is the most remarkable intellectual contest ever witnessed or achieved by humanity. It forms the partition-wall of two contiguous worlds: receding antiquity, and the beginning of modern time. With reference to civilization and mental culture, it is the common centre and turning-point of all progressive development. But this great contest, so important in its results, to be suitably described in a history of Literature which is not confined to mere philological enquiry but aspires to a delineation of its influence on the destiny of nations and on collective humanity, demands further preliminary investigation. It will, first, be necessary to examine, more particularly, the actual spirit of Greek philosophy, and, having determined upon the precise positions taken by the Mosaic and Christian doctrines in the history of mankind, we will then proceed to take a rapid survey of other oriental traditions which, in part, were connected with the Mosaic and Christian teaching, and, in part, constituted the primitive sources of loftier Greek perception.

Further opportunities will occur of sketching the poetic magnificence, fanciful imagery, and interesting works of art, that the inventive genius of man has produced. We must, for the present, be content with directing attention exclusively to that point which desirable and necessary curiosity

has fixed as the centre of all improvement and of the history of the human mind.

Plato and Aristotle were the greatest masters, or rather they may be considered as indicating the whole compass, of Greek intelligence. Plato treated philosophy entirely as an art, Aristotle as a science: in the former we see Reason, in its calm state of contemplation, admiring the attributes of supreme Perfection. Whilst Aristotle considered Reason, in reference to its properties of spontaneous activity and instrumentality: not merely as the motive power of human thought and being, but likewise as the immaterial principle of action in the manifold phenomena of nature. Plato is the perfection of Grecian art; Aristotle the essence of Grecian science.

When Plato refutes the Sophists, pursuing them through the winding maze of intricate doubt and confusion, he himself becomes subtle and hypercritical: sometimes, with all his Attic art and beautiful refinement, he becomes unintelligible and sophistical like the doctrine he combats. Yet, the prominent idea of his philosophy is ever clearly visible. According to his theory, there dwells in man a dim reminiscence of Divine perfection. This innate implanted memory of the Divine, is, as it were, faint and indistinct, inasmuch as the world of sense, itself imperfect and subject to change, presents us with incomplete, variable, and erroneous impressions, thereby darkening the original rays of light within us. Again, whenever anything appears in the world of sense and in nature, resembling some property of the Divinity or some lineament of supreme Perfection, this latent dormant reminiscence awakes. Beauty animates the spectator with admiration and love that are not directed to the beautiful object itself, at least not to its corporeal presence, but rather the invisible ideal. In this admiration, this aroused reminiscence, this enthusiasm that takes complete possession of the faculties, spring all higher knowledge and truth: and are, therefore, not produced by calm reflection, by means of a process of voluntary and systematic thought, but being far beyond the power of the will, or reflection, or mere art, are communicated by Divine inspiration.

Thus, Plato assumes a supernatural source of thought as

necessary for the knowledge of the Divinity and Divine things, and this is the essential characteristic of his philosophy. The dialectic part of his works is only the *negative*, in the course of which he refutes error with masterly art, or, with still greater and hitherto matchless skill, leads us step by step to the threshold of Truth. But when he would conduct us within her sacred precincts, in the *positive* portion of his work, he adopts oriental allegory and poetic myth; in perfect accordance with the fundamental idea of his system, respecting a higher source of perception, namely, Enthusiasm, Inspiration, or Revelation. It must not be denied that his philosophy is left unfinished, and he himself never attained to perfect clearness and precision of view. This is particularly obvious in the disunion, nowhere very intelligibly explained by his philosophy, of the elements of Reason and Love or Enthusiasm. When speaking of the love of the beautiful, and of divine enthusiasm—as influencing man:—when expressly recognizing that these emotions, from which he deduces all higher truth, transport the mind beyond the boundaries of pure thought and reason, and contain loftier ideas than are attainable by these alone, then Plato would appear to entertain and pre-suppose more lively and experimental notions of the perfection of Divinity. But when he employs only his dialectic art, he, not unfrequently, falls into the usual representations of the immutable and unconditional unity of Reason, as the highest conception of complete perfection. In this, he was, doubtless, in some measure fettered by the influence and authority of the older philosophers. On the whole, his doctrines remained in the unfinished state in which he left them, deducing Divine truth from mere reminiscence and expressing the same in allegory: a renewed Greek reminiscence of primeval Asiatic philosophy, and an imperfect foreshadowing and presentiment of Christianity, wrapt in the splendour of Attic genius and art, and Socratic ethics.

By means of the Socratic philosophy he was, in a certain measure, preserved from a visionary extravagance, as also were his immediate followers at Athens, whom the incompleteness of his philosophy drove again into the depths of doubt and scepticism. But, in reality, the ten-

dency to the visionary, which was so strongly developed in his successors, was involved in his mode of thought and his principles. A recognition, such as his, of supernatural sources of knowledge, undefined in his theory, a dim recollection, enthusiasm, and divine inspiration conducting man beyond the boundaries of thoughtful consideration, inevitably led to this aberration. A more fixed and steady impulse was wanting to fashion this vague and wavering presentiment of truth into resolute conviction, into genuine belief: the Divine word which solves the enigma of the Eternal and discriminates between false inspiration and true Revelation.

When, therefore, the later disciples of Plato sought to complete the unfinished system of their master by means of oriental ideas and traditions, their efforts were not, indeed, in strict conformity with Attic principles of taste and judgment, or the Socratic spirit of his doctrines, but not very repugnant to his philosophy, or avowed tenets respecting supernatural sources of information: on that very principle all oriental systems and traditions, more or less, rested.

The fundamental and all-pervading tenet of Aristotle's method cannot by any means be discerned with equal clearness, on account of his great obscurity, with which even his most devoted adherents have, in all ages, had to find fault. Yet, the spirit of his philosophy is abundantly manifest in its results, and intimately connected with that same obscurity which has been so generally admitted and censured. How comes it that this great genius, this perfect master of expression and of thought, in every department of experimental science a most enlightened observer and acute critic, the actual founder of a definite method of exact thought, who first systematized scientific reflexion and the practice of logic, is nevertheless so unsatisfactory and unintelligible when addressing himself to such lofty questions as the destiny and origin of man, of God, of the world? Simply because, not accepting Plato's doctrine concerning the supernatural source of knowledge, which appeared to him both contrary to science and unsatisfactory, he held that Reason and Experience ought alone to be regarded as the real sources of all knowledge. These two, namely, Reason and Experience, he endeavours to connect and unite by the introduction of

every intermediate contrivance. He was so enamoured of this method, that he pronounced Virtue to consist in the avoidance of extremes, and placed it in the mean between two opposite faults. He had recourse to the same remedy, when he attempted to adjust the old difference—in a scientific consideration of the external world—namely, a view of the eternal and unchangeable principle, clashing with the continual mutability of external created matter. The first divine cause of all motion, he says, is itself immoveable, but everything in this our sublunary world is subject to continual change and motion. Midway between these two opposite extremes, he places the sidereal heavens, or the astral world, which, though not moving by spontaneous will, is nevertheless nearer to the first great Cause, inasmuch as its rotatory motion is perfect and eternal. In like manner, that he might fill up the mighty chasm between sense and reason, he conceived the idea of a passive suffering intellect, as an objective and intermediate common sense between the two. All this deserves our admiration on the score of shrewd invention, even though it may not be perfectly satisfactory: indeed, this method may be productive of the happiest results, when we wish to comprehend a peculiar subject, just as it is, and to consider it on all sides. But when applied to questions of such paramount importance—which man can never lose sight of—as human destiny, the Divine nature, the enigma of life, existence generally, and the origin of all things: neither Experience nor Reason give a satisfactory solution. The evidence of pure sense conducts the enquirer to denial and unbelief: Reason is bewildered in her own confusion, and when addressing herself to such simple and inevitable topics, presents us with mere unintelligible formulas. This remark is peculiarly applicable to Aristotle, whose philosophy hangs suspended between a baseless Idealism and a material Experience. If we consider the great majority of his elaborate investigations, especially as applied to physics or moral philosophy, the latter element—Experience—seems to predominate, and Aristotle presents himself to our view as the great master of ancient empiric philosophy; not only because of the immense extent of his information, but also from the method he adopts in the process of his investigations, and the principles he has deduced. Nevertheless, the

radical idea characteristic of his metaphysical doctrine is, indubitably, the ideal conception of self-governing action, or Entelechia. But if, instead of a literal conception of the world, as a whole, he supplies us only with isolated observations respecting individualities, or when seeking to comprehend the great first Cause, he offers us mere formulas and empty abstractions concerning the nature of things: conclusions similarly unsatisfactory are arrived at by all who have taken Aristotle's course, and have wished to explain all by means of self-consciousness, reason, or experience, ignoring every loftier source of information, revelation, and tradition of the truth.

The number of those who have trodden the same, or a similar, path in philosophy with Aristotle, is countless. In antiquity he himself had but few disciples: then came a time, when the name of those who, throughout the schools of the East and West, professed his doctrine without comprehending the spirit of their master, was Legion. Since then, the errors of his scholars have been put to his account, and though at first idolised, he has been vilified and contemned. Yet there have been not a few, down to our own day, who, almost unconsciously, have adhered to his philosophy: some, who knew him not at all, or, at most, very little; others, who had been his most bitter opponents. The former include such as, having entered upon a course of abstruse self-thought, soon turned off into a by-path of ideal obscurity, in character similar to that of the Stagyrite, and their number is small; the latter, from Locke downwards, have laboured to set up Experience as the sole fountain of information even for philosophic purposes: whence if they would proceed scientifically, they can never altogether dispense with abstract thought, and therefore must, ultimately, acknowledge formulas akin to those of Aristotle.

Thus, these two great master-spirits, Plato* and Aristotle, have to a certain extent exhausted the whole essence of human thought and knowledge. Imperfectly understood in their own generation, they exercised the greater influence on posterity, whose intellect, for many a century, they all

* With reference to Plato's system, modified and adapted to the views of the Eclectics, the curious reader is referred to the works of Brucker Stanley, and Professor Mainer.—*Translator's note.*

but exclusively led, not in the various departments of science only, but likewise determined the great principles that regulate life. To this day, after the lapse of twenty centuries, when the mind has received a vast accession of information from a thousand discoveries, when we are enabled to set off whole libraries containing valuable records of antiquity, and statistics of philosophical enquiry, against the few volumes at Plato's command; when Aristotle's ingenious views of the universe appear to us like the notions of childhood; when Christianity has afforded us a livelier insight into the ways of God and the nature of man: these two reasoners still maintain their pre-eminence; they still mark the capabilities of the human mind; even now, every kind of philosophy is, *necessarily*, either Platonic or Aristotelian, or an attempt more or less successful to fuse the elements of both these methods of philosophizing into one. Whosoever admits a loftier tradition of truth as a source of knowledge, agrees with Plato, and enters the spacious domains of his philosophy, which is, indeed, no narrow system, but a Socratic art emancipated from the trammels of sophistry, and open to every species of honest and logical extension. Those who prefer the other system, that of Reason and Experience, will find it difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to evade the conclusions of Aristotle, or to surpass them. On his own ground, and in his own manner, he is great and unrivalled. Of genius such as his, embracing all the varied experience of an age, and controlling its scientific destinies, the history of the world affords but few more examples: he was, incontestably, the greatest master of reasoning in all time.

The later philosophy of the Greeks was composed of these two ingredient elements; excellent in point of art, comprehensive for science, but not at all satisfactory for the investigation of truth. Plato's spirit was in the ascendant, and prevailed more and more, but recourse was had to Aristotle to supply deficiencies in the external scientific form, and various oriental views and traditions contributed to complete his speculations. Such was the position of affairs in the age when the new Platonists vainly contended against the Christian doctrine.

Notwithstanding that intellectual culture was more es-

pecially directed to outward life, and to the beautiful in art, despite the consciousness of their pre-eminence, and no small share of national vanity, the deepest thinkers among this intellectual people had a deep reverence for the profundity and sublimity of oriental wisdom, both in early and later times. Their glance was peculiarly turned to Egypt, as the primitive source of their own mythology and traditions: India was viewed by them as the more remote background of speculative thought. The creed of the Hebrews and that of the Persians were equally foreign to the genius of the Greeks. To the Egyptians, Phœnicians, and the inhabitants of Asia Minor, they were united by the bond of a common religion: which, notwithstanding many differences in detail, harmonized generally in substance and fundamental structure. We know that the religion of other races of antiquity was essentially distinct from that of the Hebrews, and, partially, from that of the Persians. Subsequent to the Greek version of the Mosaic records in the reign of the great Philadelphus,* probably many, before Longinus, felt and admired their sublimity, and were inclined, with those of later times, to interpret Moses after Platonic fashion, or even to deduce Plato from Moses, which many have in various ages attempted to do. On the whole, the faith and manners of the Hebrews, as also afterwards the doctrines of Christianity, remained a strange phenomenon in the eyes of the Greeks and Romans, which they could not clearly comprehend, and respecting the particulars of which, on a nearer acquaintance, they formed the most singular opinions. This is not to be wondered at, since the very simplest view respectively taken by the one or the other, of man and of the beginning of his being, as also the origin of knowledge and mental culture, sensibly differed. According to Greek and Roman theories, the first of mankind had everywhere sprung out of the earth as aboriginals;† just as the fervid heat of the sun often

* The second of the fourteen Ptolemies, who reigned in Egypt from 323—30, B.C. He received this name on account of having married his own sister, Arsinoë. Theocritus mentions him, Idyll. 17.—*Transl. note.*

† The ancient Athenians wore in their hair golden grasshoppers (τέττιγες) to shew that they were **Αὐτόχθονες**, sprung from the same earth.—*Transl. note*

creates or at least arouses stagnant life in moist and slimy localities, since nature, whose inner agency is in a state of continual ferment and activity, seizes every opportunity of hatching matter that has life and motion, though what is produced be sometimes of imperfect development. This view took too prominent cognizance of one element in man, the earth; his other and higher element, the Divine spark resident within his spirit, was regarded as the reward of ingenious theft from heaven.* The Mosaic doctrine, on the other hand, sets forth that man did not spring up everywhere and fortuitously, but was placed in a given locality by a superior intelligence: and that his God-like spirit was not the result of audacious theft, but graciously given to him by the hand of Divine Love. In reference to the primitive history of mankind and of human intellect, the following inference may be drawn from this doctrine, in unison with all other traditions. The cradle of human civilization may be fixed in Central Asia, that lovely garden of the earth, excelling in every kind of natural advantage, and watered in all directions by noble streams. Some mighty catastrophe, universal in its operation, entirely separated mankind of the present time from an older and pre-existing race. The nations that again rallied into civilization, subsequent to the catastrophe, consist of three primæval families, materially differing from each other in genius and character, and descended from three ancestors, Shem, Japheth, and Ham. One of these, most extensively scattered over Central Asia, from the remotest times more enlightened than the rest; then, a second, more especially stocking the north with rude but uncorrupted, and less morally degenerate children of nature, and who, on that very account, afterwards derived the greater advantages from the more early refinement of civilized nations; and the third, a people early sharing a high degree of civilization, but, gradually, losing all traces of the same, through extreme moral corruption, and its concomitant degeneracy. This view is so generally established by the records and monuments of antiquity, and

* Allusion is here doubtless made to Prometheus, whose ingenuity and cruel punishment are celebrated in some of the grandest effusions of ancient minstrelsy.—*Transl. note.*

by progressive enquiry of every kind, that we may safely consider it as a recognized and authenticated basis of all historical truth. Both portions of our Revelation—Mosaic tradition, as well as the promulgation of Christianity—are, in different ways, the central point in the history of the human mind. Christianity gave the civilized Roman world a new faith, new customs and laws, a rule of life altogether new, and, hence, on account of their intimate connection with modes of thought and manners, there sprang up a new system of art and science, entirely distinct in character and peculiar in operation. However, it is to Mosaic tradition that we must turn if we would examine the other portions of Eastern culture from a right point of view. Not that this development was not of high antiquity even among other peoples, as for instance, the Egyptian monuments alone, if no other proofs were extant, sufficiently attest such high antiquity; at that same gigantic architecture, before whose ruins the modern traveller still stands awe-stricken, Herodotus gazed twenty-two centuries ago, and ascribed them then to a remote antiquity. We know that hieroglyphics existed before the time of Moses, and he himself says he was versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. But the arts and sciences, those consecrated vessels, as it were, of Divine truth, and intended only to serve her purposes, were justly wrested from Egyptian hands, that so shamefully misapplied and abused them. Some modern writers have laboured hard to refute this pre-eminent privilege,—peculiar to the Mosaic records, before all other Asiatic traditions—of containing a purer and more pellucid stream of truth. Some of these have attempted to deduce all wisdom from Egypt, an idea probably borrowed from ancient critics: others have zealously extolled Chinese polity and manners, with ardent praises of the moral philosophy of Confucius. Whilst those have not been wanting who would people the North with an Atlantic primeval race: or, penetrated with the profound wisdom and exquisite beauty of the Indian mind, a fourth class of admirers have accepted the notoriously fabulous chronology of the Bramins, thereby setting all sound principles of criticism at defiance: in short, every kind of improbability and fiction, however gross, has been at least

ostensibly received and maintained in preference to accepting the simple truth.

Of the several nations participating in Oriental culture, and whose remote origin is clearly traced by means of Egyptian, Persian, and Indian memorials, the Persians were most akin to the Hebrews in faith and in traditions: for the same reason, they differed all the more from Grecian standards. It was under the mild and friendly sceptre of Persian monarchy that the scattered Hebrews were again collected and united, and their temple rebuilt. To the creed of the Egyptians, the Persians were quite as inimical as the Hebrews, hence Persian rule was the more stringent in Egypt, seeing that the conquerors were desirous of rooting out the native religion, from a conviction of its baneful superstition and gross idolatry. Long before the Greek Gelon,* on the occasion of his making a treaty with the Carthaginians, with a humanity characteristic of his nation, insisted on their discontinuing human sacrifices, the Persian emperor Darius had forbidden this very practice, doubtless on the ground of his purer and more spiritual religion. The Persians recognized and adored the same God of light and truth with the Hebrews, though there was a considerable admixture of mythological fiction and substantial error in their recognition of the truth. Holy Scripture calls Cyrus anointed of the Lord, language which no gratitude would ever have applied to an Egyptian Pharaoh. The whole Persian mode of life, and the government of their empire, were based on this sublime faith. As a sun of righteousness, the monarch was intended to be a visible image of the supreme God and of eternal light; whilst seven of the principal nobles answered to the Amshaspands,† or the seven invisible powers swaying the various agencies of nature in diverse regions, in right of their spiritual sovereignty. To these views the Greeks were utter strangers. The same Syrian potentate, who bitterly persecuted the

* Tyrant of Syracuse, 480 B.C. He was as good a sovereign as he was a brave soldier. His victory over the Carthaginians, on the same day that the Greeks and Persians fought off Salamis, was eminently decisive. The Carthaginian power was utterly prostrated.—*Transl. note.*

† The seven superior spirits of good are so called by the Parsees, the number, probably, corresponding to that of the planets. Of these Ormuzd is the head.—*Transl. note.*

Hebrews on account of their faith, and would have compelled them to adopt the religion of the Greeks, was likewise desirous of annihilating the Persian creed. Alexander, too, had endeavoured to extirpate the Magi, not so much from caprice or wanton oppression, as because the existence of their order presented formidable obstacles to the accomplishment of his leading wish. He aimed at a fusion of the Persian and Greek nations, and to effect this object no middle path was practicable; the Greeks must either adopt fire-worship, abandoning their temples, so many of which the Persians, under Xerxes, had razed, since they regarded them as subservient to the purposes of superstitious idolatry; or else the doctrines of the Zendavesta,* must be supplanted by the introduction of Greek or Egyptian forms of religious service into Persia.

The essential error of the Persian creed consisted in this, that, whilst recognizing the power which contends against light and goodness, they did not see that the agency of this power, though it may seem to have extensive influence over man and nature, is as nothing when contrasted with that of God: in a word, they accepted two fundamental principles, a good and an evil deity.

Several commentators of recent times, not being able to deny the similarity existing between the Persian faith and that of the Hebrews, have endeavoured to explain the same by suggesting that the Hebrews derived much, if not all, of their knowledge from the Persians, during their exile and forcible detention in that great empire. So gratuitous an assumption cannot fail to strike the mere historical student, since the connection between the Persians and Hebrews which is thus held to be of comparatively recent standing, can be proved to have dated far back into remote time, both by the joint testimony of both these nations and by the very nature of the case; in fact, deeper investigation gives a very different result from this superficial hypothesis. Though, in detail, it may be sufficiently difficult to reconcile with critical accuracy the Persian traditions of Kaiomer, Hoschenk, and Dschemschid, with the patriarchal line of ancestors mentioned in Genesis, to whom is attributed some

* A common name for all sacred writings of the ancient Persians: most of them were composed by Zoroaster.—*Transl. note.*

especial degree of enlightenment—Adam and Seth, or Enoch, Noah and Shem. On the whole, however, holy tradition in both cases rests on one and the same common basis, being deduced from a Revelation of sacred ancestry, as the source of Divine enlightenment. The defective hypothesis alluded to, gives rise to a completely erroneous point of view. The pre-eminence of the Hebrews, before all other Asiatic races, entirely consists in their having handed down to posterity the truths entrusted to them with the strictest fidelity in blind obedience and faith, a boon the value of which was often not apprehended by themselves; while among all other nations these truths were either not recognized, or lost, or disfigured by the most extravagant fictions and fearful errors. This negative character, so to speak, is borne by all the sacred writings of the Hebrews, and especially, the Mosaic records. Whatsoever was virtually to be law, is set forth in terms the most explicit. In the beginning of the record, that which concerns man internally is so intelligible that the most ignorant, nay savages, or even childhood that has begun to be observant of passing occurrences, may easily apprehend its import. General history also, a common origin, and the earliest fortunes of the human race, are all expounded as far as is essential to belief. But so much as could serve only to gratify the longings of speculative curiosity, Moses has to a great extent shrouded in mystery. The concise information he has conveyed, with almost hieroglyphic brevity, respecting the first ten progenitors in early history, has been amplified by the Persians, Indians, and Chinese into whole volumes of mythology, and legends half poetic, half metaphysical.

The qualities of surpassing fancy and inventive metaphysics, of a profound acquaintance with nature and her laws, must be assigned to the Persians rather than the Hebrews. In astronomy, architecture, and all such arts as formed the especial study of other Eastern nations, the Hebrews were likewise inferior. At those questions only, which, if not pointedly answered, might for the future serve to shake confidence in God, the narrative of the sufferings of Job offers an explanation,—a narrative that, if judged only on its own merits and by the canons of profane criticism, must ever rank as one of the most sublime and characteristic efforts of antiquity. No longer thickly veiled in Mosaic secresy, but

serene and clear as noon-day the knowledge of God is manifested in the songs of David, the allegories of Solomon, and the prophecies of Isaiah. Here are exhibited a blaze of splendour and a loftiness of view which, considered in reference to mere poetic composition, excite our admiration, distance all competition, and confound every attempt to depreciate them; they are a fiery fountain of divine inspiration, by which the greatest poets down to our own day have been stimulated to their boldest flights. But, even this clearness is still prophetical, and it is half concealed, and its full development is to be looked for in the future. Careful discrimination is necessary: it is not the sensuous transparency of artistic thought, as in the highly wrought, intellectual efforts of the Greeks; it is not the masculine energy, and decided vigour of the Romans, but a prophetic depth totally different from both of these, and intelligible only in its peculiar sense, that pervades the sacred writings of the Hebrews. Their whole feelings and existence seemed to be not so much a thing of the present as of the past, and still more of the future. The past was no poetic reminiscence, as it is among other nations, but a solemn relic of their Divine institutions, and of the eternal covenant. Thoughts of the Eternal were not, with them, distinguished from the circumstances of temporal life, as was the case in the isolated philosophy of solitary Grecian sages, but interwoven in the tissue of life generally, in the web of a wondrous past of the chosen people, and the still more glorious promises of a mysterious future. Historically considered, the palmy period of the Hebrews was of no long duration; the Mosaic legislation and plan of life scarcely ever reached full maturity, for never did the people fulfil the intentions of their Divine lawgiver. Long tossed about in the wilderness, and subjected to the ever-changing shifts of a chastened nation, the sanctuary attained the dignity of a splendid temple for a brief period only, in the reign of Solomon. It was speedily reduced to nothing, as a punishment for national crime, and when re-erected, with the sanction and favour of Persian monarchy, the treasures and memorials of the past were, indeed, once more collected and preserved: but the flourishing period of the Hebrew mind was well nigh past. Like the Romans, the later Jews were unable to contend against the onward progress of Grecian thought, civilization,

and literature. Yet, ever did the existence of this peculiar people, in a prophetic manner, more especially, if not exclusively, point to futurity.

If after these preliminary remarks we desire to comprehend and characterize the essence of Hebrew thought or the sacred writings of the Old Testament, more completely, as a whole, as far as is practicable, within the intellectual horizon of mental development in art and science, over which these sacred records have exerted so great an influence, it will be necessary in the first place, to remove all erroneous representations. We are considering the Old Testament not merely as the abstract of Hebrew intellect, but as the first part of God's written Word, and are including this holy book in the history of Literature. And how, indeed, could a suitable explanation and history of the Word, with its manifold development, possibly exclude all cognizance of the Divine Word? But the peculiar worship and theology of the Hebrews, as well as the character and spirit of the biblical writings, will be most clearly explained by their opposites. It was no heathen, sidereal, nature-worship, but a strictly moral service, with heroic belief in Providence. There were no mysteries, no arrogant, secret, esoteric doctrines intended for the educated or powerful few: but a true national church, a Theocracy animating and influencing the whole of life. Neither were the subtle dogmas of an ingenious philosophy allowed to prevail, enunciating, perhaps, very sublime truths respecting God and Divine things, yet without sufficient organic force to take a proper and permanent hold of the world: but there was to be a firm, steady bond of union, a living intercourse with God, in childlike fear and unchangeable love.

Thus, it will be seen, then, that the sacred writings of the Hebrews form a more complete whole than the mental productions of any other nation—constituting, in reality, a Divine book: in connected correspondence, and an extension of one and the same subject continued for upwards of a thousand years. A unique book, for it treats but of one subject, man, and the people of God. A book suitable for all classes of readers, inasmuch as its contents are prefigurative for all coming ages, and typical for entire humanity. Its subject, though radically one, may, nevertheless, be considered in twofold reference. It may be said, also, to have a twofold

centre, some of the leading parts bearing directly on the Word of life and the Divine deliverance and redemption to be effected by it; others, on the Church or the union and league of the Elect, to whom the Word of life and of Divine love was entrusted, for use, preservation, and dissemination. These two subjects can, by no means, be wholly severed, or separately promulgated: but it is possible for the one Idea to predominate here, the other there, as will be seen when we proceed to details. There are four principal divisions (or parts) of the Old Testament, referring to one common centre—the church of the old Covenant, or the elect people of God. They are Genesis: Thora, or the Mosaic law: the historical books: the Prophets. From these we learn, first, the original establishment of the primitive Church, rising out of the ruins of the old World and the earliest patriarchal times: then, the institution, legislation, and organic arrangement of the same. The historical books inform us of the fortunes, crimes, chastenings, and wonderful guidance of the chosen people: whilst the prophets exhibit, after its decline, the regeneration, spiritual glory, and future perfection of the primitive Church. The wonderful book of Genesis, even though compiled and written by Moses, at a later period, essentially breathes the spirit of the antique in every syllable of its contents. It is, in truth, the Gospel of the old Covenant: revealing man's astounding secret, and possessing the key to all Revelation, it is of especial importance in unlocking the hieroglyphs of a primeval world which would otherwise be unintelligible.

Here we have a plain disclosure of the origin of evil on earth: a subject with which other ancient doctrines, poetical cosmogonies, and heathen Vedas* have been inextricably perplexed. Instead of the false Maya† of the Indians, we observe the true Eve, the mother of all living, human beings: we see how the serpent beguiled man to take of the fruit of spurious knowledge, and how the tree of earthly creation was corrupted and poisoned at the fall of the first man. The origin of all demoniac aberrations is manifested in Cain and his curse-marked race, which, spreading to the South and East,

* This term, in Indian religion, signifies the whole system of traditions, laws, &c. issuing from Bramah.—*Transl. note.*

† One of the superior Indian deities: the goddess of love, and, curiously enough, the mother of Kama who answers to Cupid.—*Transl. note.*

in the land of Ham, planted magic rites and the worship of evil spirits among a considerable portion of mankind. Babel furnishes us with the foundation of all political demolition, and of that perpetual dispersion of people and states that has continued for thousands of years, in ebb and flow, towards the West and North, from one quarter of the globe to another. Moreover, this Genesis of man demonstrates how, notwithstanding a succession of degeneracy and false worship, Divine truth is maintained in an unbroken series of holy traditions, from its first beginning in Adam, the father of the earth, through Seth and Enos, inspired Enoch—whom other nations, too, regard as the earliest sage—righteous Noah, presenting a sacrifice on behalf of all nature, elect Shem,—revered as a king and ancestor by the noblest races—down to Abraham, with whom commences a new epoch of special belief in Providence, with implicit surrender of the human will to the divine. This same Genesis shews us that the true religion of antiquity was no sidereal adoration of nature, but a pure recognition of Jehovah, a genuine, though still incomplete Christianity: not a religion of the law, which it came to be afterwards, but a religion of nature. But, it was not nature herself, and her inexhaustible productive powers that formed the object of adoration, but God or Christ in nature. Hence, we must carefully discriminate between the pure religion of these holy progenitors of the human family,—and the sidereal, nature-worship of later, degenerate paganism. It was always Jehovah, Christ, or the wonder-working Word of nature, that those Patriarchs held intercourse with, by means of prayer like Enos, by Divine inspiration and pious resignation like Enoch and Noah. Melchisedek is named as the last of this series of Patriarchs, and he marks the transition-point from the Word of nature to the Word of the law which begins with Abraham, to whom, as the first servant of faith the Word of nature was delivered over by its last high-priest. Uninterrupted connexion being thus maintained with the patriarchal world, Abraham, or rather the Mosaic law, inaugurates the second, nationally judaic element of the sacred volume: the historical writings constituting the third element among those books that refer to the Divine institution, progressive development, and wonderful guidance of the

ancient Church and the elect people. Of the prophets, who, in varied streams of prophecy, conclude the list, the four major beam forth their welcoming rays to the coming glory, like the Cherubim bending over the still closed Ark of the coming glory, according to the quaternary number consecrated to the Revelation of Divine excellence and characterized by the four mysterious animal-symbols. The twelve minor prophets are so many stars of lesser magnitude, surrounding with a glory the four principal luminaries of Divine prophecy. On the whole, the Old Testament is not so strictly exclusive in its structure as a system of temporal art or mundane science is wont to be, but, rather, resembles a living, moss-grown tree, girt with vigorous shoots. Thus, if, for instance, the most notable historical books describe to us the errors, chastenings, and saving guidance of the chosen people, in general terms, those particular tales and Hebrew legends—which in ordinary, literal, and historical point of view, would only constitute an incidental episode of the whole—such as Ruth, Judith, Esther, Tobias, shew us the same Providential care exercised for the benefit of individuals. These biographies may be regarded in the light of historical parables of the Old Testament: they serve as so many commentaries on the larger history, and though, when superficially viewed, of little historical importance, they contain a symbolical meaning, both rich and valuable: no high, spiritual interpretation of the Bible would desire to dispense with them completely. If the sacred writings be compared to a living tree, the historical books are the deep-rooted trunk: the Mosaic Revelation, especially Genesis, its splendid top, towering to the clouds: whilst the Prophets are the four-branched base, striking root in a chosen soil, out of which Christianity is to shoot forth in full verdure. In addition to those portions of the Old Testament, that have been named, especially bearing on the Church of the old Covenant or of God's chosen people as a general centre, there is yet another series of writings in the sacred compilation which I would style books of aspiration. And for this reason, that they have reference only to the Word of life and of deliverance, in faith and love, in aspiration and promise, without direct allusion to the church and history of the chosen people, at least, in total independence

of all positive law, and individualities in its organic formation. To these aspirations the book of Job, preeminently, belongs: which, although having not the slightest contact with the Mosaic institution, presents us with an important and almost necessary supplement to Mosaic Revelation, inasmuch as it invokes the spirit of belief and of trust in God, during a religious period when the promises of futurity did not beam forth with so bright a splendour. It is only when considered in this connection, that the book of Job appears in its right place, and in its full importance. The Psalms are the second, and the writings of Solomon the third, members of this series: and thus, there is a threefold division, as in the inner Christian life there is a triple chord of faith, hope, and love. In the same manner that Job is mainly concerned in manifesting patient and enduring faith, and the writings of Solomon declare unto us the secret of Divine Love, and the words of Wisdom which proceeds from that Love, and is in itself Love—so the Psalms are songs of the Divine desire, and amidst the struggles of longing hope. But as Job is more intimately connected with the older Mosaic time, so the two latter, more especially the Psalms, are, in their peculiar imagery and thought, not unfrequently typical of the prophets. Again, these three classes, together with the four principal prophets, form one complete, closely-united mass, girding, tendril-like, the trunk of the institution, history, and prophecy of the chosen people, with the triple power of the Divine spirit. Christian perfection and blessedness are sublimely veiled in these three holy books, as in a cloud: Job shews us faith in the heroic endurance of suffering, Solomon declares to us Love in symbolic mystery, whilst the Psalms breathe forth hope in the struggle of earthly aspiration. In these latter, Christ, the eternal Word of life and of reconciliation, everywhere clearly expresses himself, and therefore the Psalms have ever been and will continue to be for all Christian time, the principal chant in all Church-melody: whilst as a divine Litany they constitute the rich fountain of Christian devotion. They delineate the meeting of the Father and the Son, the anxious longing of the Son to be once more with his Father after painful separation, and the merciful condescension of

the Father, as they seek out each other in the surges of creation, and approach each other on the central ground of love. Viewed from this point, the idea of Divine inspiration is realized, that is to say, the vital essence of inspiration: whilst the closed cycle of the sacred writings, commonly called the Canon, which is presumed to contain all that is substantially requisite for church doctrine and government, is, by rightful authority, positively determined and dogmatically fixed. If the Spirit of God be such as to proceed at once from the Father and the Son, its presence is most conspicuous when both, the hidden bosom of the Father, in creative longing and almighty depths of affection—and the mysterious Word of the everlasting Son, meet and kindle into one glowing flame of illumination. The united and complete power of Divine life and agency is the stamp unmistakably impressed on the whole framework of the Scriptures in their whole spirit and structure, though in some parts the omnipotence of the Father, in others the glory of the Son, is more prominently set forth. If we are asked what gives the Bible, in its poetical portions, that more than Pindaric enthusiasm, and in its pure contemplation of the Godhead, that more than Platonic sublimity, we should feel disposed to answer, it is this, the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son! But if we would determine more exactly the character and the spirit of the Old Testament, according to those four holy symbolic animals, who mark and signify four sides or different spheres in any revelation of the Divine Being, we may venture to say that the books of the Old Testament bear chiefly the impress of the lion, as the element of the ardent power of will in the divine fire. But as this good and pious courage of the lion is only directed outwards, but in the interior of the heart the loving lamb-like sentiments must dwell, and these two images of antiquity are here thus bound and connected with one another; thus in the inmost heart and soul of this divine book the Christian form of the lamb rises from the covering of this lion-like power, as the symbol and gospel of the eternal sacrifice and of divine love.

Having thus attempted to sketch the arrangement and organic composition of the Old Testament in its unity, as

also to convey an idea of the construction of the whole in its sevenfold division, the seven principal members and their adjuncts, it only remains to characterize the several peculiarities of expression and outward form of the Biblical representation. Of these forms peculiar to Holy Writ there are four principal ones:—Aphorism; Parallelism, chiefly in the poetical parts; Vision, in the prophetic books and passages; and Parable, or Allegory, which last is not confined to mere isolated sections, but pervades the whole in its figurative mode of thought. The first of these, Aphorism, being the simplest expression of vigorous living thought, and consequently often figurative, is especially suited to the primitive habits and tastes of all nations, and, accordingly, common to all races and people in their earliest epochs. When treating of the Greeks, it will be remembered, we took occasion to allude to aphorism, as the form which their philosophy originally adopted, as also to the distichs of the Gnomic bards. With still greater prominence this form appears in the Indian metrical aphorism, or Schloka, as it is technically termed, the distich peculiar to Sanscrit literature: whilst, generally speaking, the loftiest poesy, and even many scientific works of olden times, were composed entirely in this form, on which all other metrical forms may be said to have been grounded. Indian aphorism bears a wonderful resemblance to the Hebrew; but the former, with its four feet of eight syllables each, has a much stricter symmetry than the latter; the Hebrew irregularity of structure and of intellectual flight corresponding most harmoniously, so that in the most pregnant passages each sentence may be called a verbal hieroglyph. This form is, of all others, best adapted to the spirit of a higher revelation: being the natural expression of the Eternal to man; it is likewise the Divine fiat, where creative action follows upon the word, giving it a peculiar stamp, as especially in Genesis. And having passed from the expression of Divine will, as law, and from the language of prophecy over to historical narrative, as well as every other species of expression, it becomes of universal application. But, in the poetry of the Hebrews, besides this aphoristic Biblical form, there is another peculiar law of living, breathing thought and rhythmical notion, not indeed of words and syllables, but of images and feelings undulating in free sym-

metry like the waves of the sea. This pouring forth of the soul seeking her God is well embodied in the parallelism of Hebrew song, visible, not merely in individual verses of the Psalms, but throughout the structure of the whole, as it is dismembered into strophes and antistrophes. A strict metre whether of syllables, musical time, or rhyme would not be so suitable to the dignified and sublime elevation of the sacred writings as that simple and free original form of poetic movement, which consists only in a repetition and correspondence of images and a rhythm of the thought. Upon the whole, it will scarcely be expected that all ordinary artistic laws are to regulate Holy Writ, but only such as in their genius might hold good in a purely spiritual order of things. It would be difficult to conceive there the existence of dramatic representation, of real *epos*, of rhetorical harangues, or of scientific treatises. But in the invisible world of god-like sentiment and of spiritual nature, inner creative Power and Will may be supposed to communicate in expression, verbal or otherwise; and even incorporeal spirits may syllabic their adoration in song that is not terrestrial. It is by a standard such as this that Biblical forms are to be judged, especially in the department that in human language is called philosophy or poetry. With reference to poetry generally, this will explain how it is that, whilst the epic form, historically considered, is the primitive and original source of all other kinds—and the dramatic form is, in point of art, the climax, the perfection of the whole, yet, even heathen nations selected the lyrical, as the most proper form for embodying their hymns. Again, it should be borne in mind, that mere beauty of form is nowhere, throughout the Bible and writings of the old Covenant, of preponderating importance. The words are words of life, simply and clearly expressed, with a deep profundity of meaning, mysteries in all their fulness are conveyed in the simplicity of unadorned history, in the mere gushing forth of the heart without any artificial embellishments.

In Hebrew Parallelism, the second peculiar form of Biblical representation, we see the sympathizing soul, lost in enthusiasm, and carried away in the stream of eternal love. Whilst in Vision, the third peculiarity of form, we behold the spirit transported by God into a higher region of pure

intuition, where, having ceased self-guidance, it only beholds and describes things not of this world. The Psalms are a free lifting up of the soul to God; in Vision, on the contrary, the mind is in a more passive, suffering condition, yielding entirely to Divine influences. The very nature of the Scriptures, as the vehicle of Divine revelation, is such that a considerable portion of their contents is necessarily couched in visions; and other parts, likewise, though not strictly prophetic, are yet tinged with the same character. Since, however, the inner, concealed, Divine essence cannot make itself known externally but by means of revelation, those contemplations of the invisible world are veiled in imagery entirely their own, and can only be conveyed by symbols. This brings us to the fourth Biblical form of expression, namely, Allegory. Just as the religion of the old Covenant is, throughout, typical of Christianity, so also, this typical account of the adventures that befel the chosen people, where history itself becomes prophetic, and has allegoric reference, is peculiar to the Old Testament; whilst the more childlike form of parable is more prevalent in the New Testament. All these images, which are not merely images but truths, constitute the elements of that hieroglyphic language that stamps Holy Writ with its own peculiar impress, and that vivid clearness of imagination that characterizes revelation in its symbolical garb.

Among the different forms of symbolical expression which are principally used in the monuments of antiquity, and especially in the Bible, we may distinguish four according to the elementary powers of human consciousness and existence. Allegory, properly so called, animates and personifies the abstract ideas of Reason according to its own design and good pleasure, On the other hand, in the symbolical events of typical history there is a real reflection and fore-tokening in which Nature repeats itself in its productions, according to the will of the Creator, from age to age, and is reflected by its own imagination. In Hieroglyphics, it is the Eternal himself and his mysteries which are rendered intelligible by a sensible figure; while the Parable, descending from this elevation, acts moraiiy on the heart, and insinuates itself into the life with unostentatious power.

On this symbolic quality and general structure of Holy

Writ is founded that allegorical meaning and system of interpretation, as essentially necessary and appropriate which in ancient times was universally employed, and was sanctioned by the Fathers of the Church. If then we add to the correct idea of the peculiar spirit in the connection of the Father with the Son, or of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and to the four peculiar biblical forms already pointed out, add the idea of a deep and complete interpretation according to the three-fold meaning,—the spirit and form of the Scriptures will be presented as clearly to us, as our present object requires. The first interpretation is, according to the literal sense which depends on the purely historical, the moral and simple dogmatic contents, and the correct grammatical understanding of it. The second kind of interpretation is the allegorical, which as a spiritual mode of understanding, brings to light, along with the literal and historical meaning, the symbolical and the typical signification. But the third and highest interpretation is founded on the hidden mystical sense which, either with or without imagery, rests on the mystery of the soul and its union with God; so that the signification depends on the internal psychological understanding of this mystery. When this knowledge "according to the soul" attains to perfect clearness, we may say that it is the Eternal word of Love itself which comprehends and understands itself in its own peculiar light. With this idea of the highest clearness in the mysterious intelligence of the soul united to God, we may conclude most suitably our remarks on the Sacred Volume.

Let us now briefly glance at the Hebrew language, the vessel and instrument selected to receive the Divine gift of Revelation. In order to mark its precise character and relative position among other languages of antiquity, it is desirable critically to investigate the internal elements of speech, since it is upon the predominance of one or other element that the peculiar spirit and tone of a language mainly depend. Accustomed as we are to divide letters into two classes—vowels and consonants—we altogether lose sight of a third, highly important though less striking, element. Aspiration, which both introduces a new power and modifies the character of existing sounds, produces vocal combinations differing, materially, from vowels as well as consonants.

Consonants susceptible of a two-fold pronunciation, a hard and a soft, belong to this species of aspirables; such as *d* and *t*; *b* and *p*; *f* and *w*; thus approximating closely to the musical harmony of vowels; as also those vowels that are eligible to serve as consonants when occasion offers, namely *i* and *u*, which may become *j* and *v*. Actual, pure consonants are the organic characteristics of a language, they form its body: vowels contain its musical ingredient, and correspond to the principle of the soul; whilst aspirable letters correspond to the Divine, spiritual element. In some languages, consonants express and characterize the prevailing element of genius, as in the Greek, Persian, and Germanic idioms. In others, the musical harmony of vowels predominates, as in modern Italian, of which the full-toned ancient Roman was, of course, the basis. The aspirate character especially distinguishes Hebrew and its kindred dialects, spiritual afflatus being preeminently marked in the inspired tones of prophetic language. Peculiarities, too, of grammatical structure obtain, such as the connecting by the article, the conjunction in the prefixes and the pronominal suffixes; these are all intimately connected with the aspirable principle and character. It is sufficiently apparent, then, that the tone and spirit of Hebrew prophetic language are a well adapted means to a definite end, to give expression to holy revelation and Divine prophecy. If it be ascertained that in each of the three classic idioms of antiquity, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, some one element stands prominently out, it must not be forgotten that in the old Indian language these several elements, which were afterwards separated, were enclosed in one common germ. The Sanskrit combines these various qualities, possessed separately by other tongues: Grecian copiousness, deep-toned Roman force, the Divine afflatus characterizing the Hebrew tongue. If we now turn our attention from these very simple isolated, and yet essential elements of language, to the principal organs which are clearly distinguished by further development in their growth and operation, we shall discover principally four which correspond to the four elementary powers of the human consciousness. The roots are the positive divine in language, the original source of the natural revelation deposited and expressed in words, as the understand-

ing of the first Man perceived them at first in the yet pure light. The grammatical forms of language and their whole artificial structure are the work of Reason: Images and tropes on the other hand are the element of the Imagination, and in the undulations of rhyme and of metrical movement, the ebb and flow of the desires and of the will are expressed. Judged by an organic standard of the principal elements of language, the Sanskrit excels in grammatical structure, and is, indeed, the most perfectly developed of all idioms, not excepting Greek and Latin. In imagery and types of every kind no language is so rich as the Hebrew: it is the prevalent element, and as all contemplation of Divine things is figurative, it follows that in this capacity, also, Hebrew is especially adapted to the purposes of Revelation. As regards grammatical roots, it would be difficult indeed to adjudge the preference to any one tongue: it is necessary to take all primitive, stock-languages, as Indian, Latin, Greek, Persian, Hebrew, and our own Germanic, into consideration, in reference to the number of original root-syllables, in order to approach, as near as may now be practicable, to the great source of the common origin of language. In rhythm and metre languages follow their own rules and modes, according to their peculiar character; and in a very high spiritual development of languages, this element is almost entirely taken from its original material soil, and nothing is left but a gentle resonance as a remembrance and echo of the tranquillised soul, as in our own Christian tongues.

We will now turn from a consideration of Hebrew literature to that of the oriental nations: but before proceeding to an examination of Indian records and memorials, it will be convenient to subjoin a few remarks respecting the religious books of the Persians, whose oldest doctrines, as we saw, were most near akin to the Hebrew, and therefore we speak of them in this connection.

In those of the sacred writings of the Parsees still extant, how much soever they may differ from the genuine form of the original Zendavesta, we trace a close resemblance, in many points, to the Mosaic doctrine. As for instance, in particulars regarding the Omnipotence of the Creator, light and darkness, the Word of life, guardian Angels, the Spirit

of evil; though, in this case, they are interwoven with nature-worship: namely, adoration of the stars, of fire and water. In this respect, the Zendavesta constitute a transition-medium between Mosaic Christian belief and pure paganism. The most intelligible account of this connection between the sidereal worship of a primitive world, and a strict recognition of the unity of the Godhead, is afforded in the Dessatix,* the holy book of the Abades, a sect not unlike the Gnostics of old: which record is one of the most curious memorials we possess of oriental antiquity.

The poetical element of the Persian religion has more affinity with the mythology of the north than that of the Greeks. The same nature-worship, namely, of light, fire, and the other pure elements, ordained in the liturgy of the Zendavesta, appears also, in poetic form, in the Edda:† giants, dwarfs, and magic creations, animate the world of Persian, as of northern, poetic, legend.

To this poetic feature of Persian literature we shall have further opportunity of referring. The ancient religious doctrine of the Persians is only adverted to here in its connection with the sacred traditions of the Hebrews.

LECTURE V.

Indian monuments and epics.—Ancient modes of sepulture.—Indian literature and intellect.

The ancient monuments of Indian architecture sufficiently attest the high antiquity of Indian mythology. In their gigantic proportions and general plan, these monuments most resemble the Egyptian, and it is difficult to assign

* The name of fifteen recently discovered prophetical books of the ancient Persians: they were printed in Bombay, and translated into English by Erskine. That great critic, Silvestre de Sacy, supposes them to date about 900.—*Transl. note.*

† Two collections of Icelandic poetry are thus styled. The word itself means *mother, founder, &c.*—*Transl. note.*

them a less remote period of existence. All such memorials, whether covered with hieroglyphics like those of Egypt: or ruins of the mighty city of Persepolis, with their yet undeciphered inscriptions, or the mythology of the Indians hewn out of solid rock: transport us in imagination to past ages from which we feel altogether separated. It may be said that just as national history has an heroic age and the present has been preceded by an epoch marked by the vestiges of physical revolution on our globe and by the remains of extinct races of animals, so also, mental culture and poetry have had their wondrous, gigantic past, when all ideas, fictions, and fancies that, at a later period, unfolded into song, into literature, into philosophy: when all human knowledge or error, as astronomy, chronology, cosmogony, theology, legislation, was expressed in huge sculpture. Of the two principal Indian epics, still extant, the one celebrates Rama, who is supposed to have conquered the southern, and more savage part of the Indian peninsula, and the island of Ceylon. He is the popular national hero, and is represented in the fulness of youthful vigour, beauty, nobleness, and love, yet, for the most part, unhappy, an exile, and in perpetual conflict with peril and suffering. An impersonification of heroic life, repeated in every beautiful legend, with such variations as depend on local influences and associations. In the bloom of youth and beauty, on the highest step of fame, power and joy, Man is often seized with a deep feeling of the fleeting nature of this earth's existence which he calls his life. This epic of Rama, as far as I have been able to judge, appears to be a work of great excellence, occupying a position between Homeric simplicity and clearness, and the exuberant fancy of Persian poetry, and adorned with a profuse variety of maxims drawn from the wisdom of the ancients. By the side of warlike deeds is delineated the retired life of holy recluses, with their wise precepts and devout discourses, most minutely detailed. On instituting a comparison of Indian and Greek epics, it is found that to heroic legend, cosmogony and poesy are superseded, the whole being threaded on Gnomic minstrelsy. It is as though Homer and Parmenides, Hesiod and Solon, were all united in one work: whilst there are some portions

that, in their especial oriental colouring, remind one forcibly of Mosaic sublimity, or the Proverbs of Solomon.

The other Indian epic, including the whole of mythology —the Mahabharat—sings of the battles which the heroes, gods, and giants, waged with one another. In similar fictions, the minstrels of the past, among all races possessing any legendary traditions soever, have embodied reminiscences of a nature struggling in the throes of the marvellous and grand, and of the tragic doom of some heroic, primitive time. At whatever later period these two poems—the Ramayan and Mahabharat—may have received embellishment and finish, it is, at any rate, certain that the poetic substance of these works is genuine, and dates from some very antique age: since the faithful images they contain are carved in rocks and caves, on those memorials of a former world. The Mahabharat is full of the Vedanta-doctrines, and is hence reputed to have been the production of Vyasa. I am not quite certain that the same philosophy is not the basis of the Ramayan, which, if ascertained, would materially affect the position of this noblest of epics in the rank of Indian literature: but, according to historical accounts, it is ascribed to the poet Valmiki,* who flourished at a considerably earlier period.

In reference to the introduction of Indian philosophy into Europe in early times, it will be recollected that Pythagoras made Greece acquainted with the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which originally came from that country. To the Greeks, this was, indeed, a novel and surprising dogma. In India it had been a popular belief ever since India had become known to mankind: it may even be presumed that the whole mode of Indian life and manners was founded on this creed. Here, then, was its home: which was certainly not at all the case in Egypt, from which more immediately Pythagoras had brought it. The Egyptian treatment of their dead confirms us in this statement. There is, undoubtedly, implanted in man a certain anxious regard for the lifeless bodies of the departed: so that nothing

* For further particulars respecting this Indian poet, the reader is referred to "The Ramayan of Valmiki," in the original Sanskrit, with a prose translation, and explanatory notes by W. Carey and J. Marshman, printed at the Mission-press, Serampore.—*Trans. note.*

is more repugnant or offensive to our notions and personal feelings than a violation of propriety on this head. The manner in which they, severally, treat their dead is an important criterion, and should be taken into account when we are estimating the social character of nations, being intimately connected with their religious views and feelings; we will, therefore, pause for a moment, to consider this point. The Greek custom of burning the dead is of very early origin. It has great attractions for the imagination. Together with the flame of the pyre, ascends the unquenchable spirit, in liberated purity, towards Heaven: its earthly part remains as ashes, a precious relic. Perhaps the most repulsive method of treatment was that in vogue among the followers of Zoroaster, and still practised in Thibet. There, in order not to defile the sacred elements, fire and earth, the remains of the dead are thrown into receptacles built expressly for the purpose, and walled in at the sides but left open at the top, and thus are exposed to birds and beasts of prey. The mode of interment sanctioned by our own religion, if proper care be taken, is certainly the most agreeable to nature. The earth receives back her own, and the corruptible body is entrusted to her maternal bosom as a seed-corn of the future. It is more congenial to our feelings to know that the body of the dead *itself* reposes in a given spot, than to contemplate an empty urn, or to gaze at a funeral pile that has reduced and on which the body has been dispersed among the general elements. The Egyptian custom of embalming, a method to which, though after a ruder fashion, the Ethiopians were wont to resort, and which, most probably, was generally practised throughout the interior of Africa, is not in complete keeping with the Indian belief in transmigration of souls. On the part of races adopting such a practice, it would seem to imply an assumption that the apparently inanimate mass was very important, and that the mysterious magnetic bond linking the spirit and the mummy was not altogether dissolved, that, perhaps, it would be again connected, involving a participation of the corruptible body in immortality! It is as though a presentiment of the resurrection of the body—as Christianity teaches—but in a false and too material application, had led the Egyptians to preserve the corpse with such diligent and engrossing care:

perhaps, too, there may have been a reference to necromancy; for, from the remotest ages, magic rites were connected with pneumatology in the whole interior of Africa. Some have been desirous to refer this custom of the Egyptians to a merely material cause, namely, as a preservative against decay: surely, a most illogical hypothesis, as though a people who disbelieved the immortality of the soul were likely to take such strict measures of precaution in behalf of the body.

The following explanation appears to me more natural. In the numerous secret societies which were spread through Egypt, many representations and views prevailed very different from the popular belief, which in no country was more superstitious: sometimes perhaps a clear light amidst the thickest darkness; but certainly a variety of different opinions: so that Pythagoras might have learned a doctrine in Egypt, which was not universally prevalent there, but of Indian origin.

The Indian doctrine of metempsychosis rested on a conception of the origin of all things in and from God; it was supposed that the state of existence in this world was one of wretchedness and imperfection, the consequence of guilt and sin: that all creatures, but especially mankind, roamed through a vast variety of shapes and forms, and were either falling lower in the scale of creation by increased offence, or, by the inward purification of their whole nature, were gradually approaching perfection, and returning to the divine Original from whom they sprung.

This essentially resembles the philosophy of Plato: and it was from this similarity, as also the influence of oriental theories on the philosophic systems of Europe, that we started when entering on these observations. But before resuming the thread of our enquiry at that point, let us more attentively examine India, in a twofold point of view:— first, the condition in which the Greeks, under Alexander, found that country, and, second, the appearance it has presented to the moderns, as we have become acquainted with it under the British rule.

India was the most Eastern region of which the Greeks had anything like a circumstantial, though still imperfect, cognizance. As conquerors, they trod its soil more than once, and,

for a brief season, they succeeded in establishing their dominion on one part of it. With the coasts, and other accessible parts, they were made acquainted entirely through their own voyages of discovery. Increasing commerce had enabled them to maintain continuous intercourse with Alexandria, and with Egypt generally, that had now been brought under Grecian sway; perhaps, too, there is little room to doubt of mutual intellectual correspondence. But with the remote East, with China, the Greeks, as indeed the whole of the West, had no direct communication, and but a very imperfect acquaintance.

It has already been shewn how the doctrine of transmigration of souls, indigenous to India, was brought into Greece, from Egypt, by Pythagoras. Commerce with India dates back as far as most records of civilized countries go. Alexander, after him the Ptolemies, especially Philadelphus, opened up to it the great high road to which Egypt owes her prosperity and wealth under these rulers. Under the Romans, likewise, Indian commerce was maintained on this route at once the nearest and most natural, until the circumnavigation of Africa led to the discovery of another mode of transit. But is it probable that Alexander and the Ptolemies would have conceived and executed this design, unless a certain degree of traffic had been already established, unless previous experience had proved its feasibility? An early connection between these two countries is the less doubtful that the Egyptian division into castes greatly resembles the social regulations of India, whilst no two mythologies have such close affinity as those appertaining to the two regions in question. This circumstance was materially confirmed by an occurrence that took place during the last war. On the landing of an Indian corps, led by British officers, in Egypt, some of those huge memorials of which the gigantic size has often excited the wonder and insatiable curiosity of Europeans, impressed the Indians with feelings of a different kind. They fell flat upon their faces, under the impression that they were worshipping the gods of their own country.

The people of India, with their time-hallowed customs and notions, to which they obstinately adhere, may, themselves, be regarded as a living memorial of the past, human

ruins of a former world; and it is not without commiserating sympathy that we view their present degradation.

When Alexander invaded the north of India from the same tract that facilitated the approach of conquerors both before and after his time—from Persia—the strange appearance of the inhabitants impressed the Greeks as powerfully as it did the Europeans in modern times, when they found the country they had so long sought. But though the Greeks met with many strange sights in that country, as in Egypt: yet their eyes no where encountered a religion so opposite to their own, as among the Hebrews and Persians. Here, as in Egypt, they found themselves on old familiar ground—a poetic polytheism—of which, at least, the broad outlines corresponded to their own. Individual deities, though somewhat different as to complexion and proportions, were recognized by them, or thought to be so: this relative correspondence or difference they significantly expressed by the appellations of Indian Hercules or Indian Bacchus. We may feel sure that very little, really remarkable, escaped their lively fancy and keen observation. But however prone to exaggeration or invention the Greeks may have become in consequence of the many novelties that crowded upon their imagination, and for which they may easily be pardoned, much that is described by the writers of this period as having been observed in the course of Alexander's expeditions has been certified by subsequent testimony. Notwithstanding many misconceptions and erroneous impressions on single points, which admit of easy explanation, the general impression of India entertained by the Greeks was both accurate and conformable to our present knowledge of that country. In their time they met with some of those recluses, mentioned in the sacred books of the Hindoos, of whose odd demeanour missionaries and English travellers have given us well-authenticated reports: the Greeks called them gymnosophists.* Two philosophical or religious sects then divided India: the *Brachmans* and *Samaneans*, and we may still trace distinct systems of Indian philosophy in her older literature: with this difference only, that the younger of these two systems at no time spread so extensively in India

* Referring to one of their ascetic practices.—*Transl. note*

as the elder branch, inasmuch as it was opposed to the existing arrangement of castes, and vigorously attacked the exclusive supremacy of the Brahmins. But over Thibet, China, and throughout central and northern Asia it was sown broadcast. The very term Samaneans, is purely of Indian extraction, denoting equable, evenness of disposition, which those hermits considered the first requisite to the attainment of perfection. *Schaman*, a term spread over a considerable portion of the Tartar races as also those inhabiting northern and central Asia, and denominating their priests and magicians, is doubtless derived from the same source, and was originally one and the same word.

The older Indian sect reveres Brama and his active agent, his prophet and spirit, Menu. The fabulous chronology of the Bramins affects even their literature, the early portions of which they ascribe to names that are altogether mythical, and of fictitious date. European critics having once been surprised into blind admission of this fabulous antiquity, it is not very strange that there are some who now fall into the other extreme, and regard the age of all Hindoo productions with feelings of suspicion, if not positive incredulity. Such a proceeding cannot fail to be unjustifiable in individual cases. Whilst the *Vedahs*, to which, as being the oldest sacred records, and embodying a complete liturgy, curiosity was, naturally, first directed, perhaps least answered the general expectation: the *Upanishat*, at once a running commentary on the Vedahs, and a supplementary extension of the same, have richer dogmatic contents, though framed in the spirit of the Vedanta doctrines, and therefore referable to the comparatively later period of *Vyasa*. The legislative code of Menu, translated by Sir William Jones, of all Indian works whose treasures faithful translation has unlocked to our use, bears the fewest traces of irresponsible revision or anonymous interpolation. It is a code of laws, indeed, but after the manner of antiquity, embracing the whole of life, being a complete social manual and portraiture, a poetic creed of deity and pneumatology, an account of the origin of man and of the world. Before the existence of prose in Greece, aphoristic sentences, short narratives, and such sparse fragments of law as were then prevalent, were couched in homely verse, devoid of ornament; in like manner, this In-

dian code is framed in distiches of most primitive construction. Many of the apophthegms are ingenious, some few passages rise to poetic beauty and sublimity. The pervading element, affecting all the social arrangements so peculiar to the ancient Hindoos, is the doctrine of transmigration of souls. Perhaps no other people was so fully influenced in feeling, thought and act, by a thorough conviction of the immortality of the soul, and of the certainty of a future life. In the poetic, popular belief of the Greeks, the world of shades formed the only back-ground to a life passed in sensuous glee and hearty merriment: the Indians may be said to reverse this, substituting the certainty of a future existence for that of a dreamy present, and rating the importance of events generally by a corresponding standard. All happy occurrences in this life are viewed by them as a mere preparation for that which is to come, while reverses and calamities of every kind are only penal expiations of former crime and error. The closest ties of nature receive a consecrating unction from this doctrine. For it teaches that the relationship of father and son, is in its inmost nature, of such strict affinity, that death itself avails not to interrupt the union, and that a son alone can effect the deliverance of his father's soul. The nuptial bond is the more sacred, that it is valid for more than the present life. In short, this spirit breathes in all Hindoo productions, deeds, and fictions, and is characteristic of their habits of thought.

From the descriptive poetry of the Hindoos we may learn to judge what influence this mode of thinking has on all their relations and feelings, and what kind of poetry, of feelings of beauty and love, can accompany notions that appear to us so strange. What we chiefly admire in their poetry is that tender fondness of solitude and the animated vegetable kingdom, that so attracts us in the drama of *Sakuntala;* the traits of female grace and fidelity, and the exquisite loveliness of childhood, of such prominent interest in the older epic legends of India. We are likewise struck with the touching pathos accompanying deep moral feeling, when the bard terms conscience "the hermit or seer in the heart," from whom nothing is hidden; and when he assures us that guilt cannot fail of being discovered, for not only do gods and the inner man know it, but nature herself that we call inani-

mate, the "sun and moon, fire and air, heaven, earth and sea shudder at it," and dread it as an outrage against nature, and a derangement of the universe. Somewhat more foreign to our sympathies, yet not without touching contrast, are some of those harrowing accounts which treat of the tortures of Indian penitents, or the immolations of Indian widows. This latter practice can, indeed, be viewed only with feelings of the strongest abhorrence; if quite voluntary on the part of the victim it amounts to suicide, if brought about by compulsory exhortation, it is a human sacrifice, and is doubly horrible when separating tender mothers from their children. European rule has aimed at an extinction of these sacrifices wherever it extended. The neighbourhood of Calcutta has, nevertheless, teemed of late with instances of this unnatural exhibition. It must be remembered that the British sway in India is based on a strict observance of the indigenous customs, manners and laws of that country. Hence, whatever may have been the amount of individual rapacity and oppression, British occupancy of India has, on the whole, been eminently beneficial to Hindoo interests, inasmuch as protection has been afforded against the persecution of intolerant Mahometans. The greater the extension of British conquests in India, the more politic does this rigid observance of native prejudices appear; the more so, as a very slight violation of them sufficed, on a recent occasion, to excite a mutinous spirit among the Sepoys. And thus, it will easily be understood how a cautious and steady adherence to this policy may extend to culpable, though tacit, permission of such rites as incremation and immolation. The number of instances recorded may, probably, derive an accession from the circumstance, that increase of population emboldens their zeal; whilst it is not impossible that the Bramins miss no opportunity of feeding popular fanaticism by means of such spectacles. In order to explain so strange a custom, it has been alleged that jealousy was not without its influence in the matter, and that it had been devised for the purpose of oppressing the female sex; but this is improbable, as it does not harmonize with the injunctions to be found in all Indian law, and exemplified in the poetry respecting the reverence to be paid to the sex. Oppression, and slight of this sort, are totally at variance with the genius

of Indian philosophy; though, it is true, Mahometan example may, latterly, have given an impetus to the exercise of such sentiments. A more appropriate reason has been suggested in reference to incremation: namely, in allusion to offering to the shades of departed warriors, especially among savage and warlike tribes, their arms and favourite steeds, with every kind of requisite for life in the next world, as well as an attendant train of slaves. On such occasions, in the first outburst of passionate agony, the familiar friend, or the betrothed lover, rushes into the devouring flame or the yawning tomb, as if it were fitting that no attachment should survive the illustrious deceased. In India, too, female immolation, ostensibly voluntary, but not unfrequently induced by forcible persuasion, was originally confined to the military caste. At no time universal, in former ages, probably, very rare, this custom was rather one of admired heroism than actual occurrence. The certainty of personal reunion in a future life, doubtless had its share in influencing tender mothers to do what would else be inconceivable; the more so, that maternal affection is represented in various delineations of Indian manners to exceed, if possible, its ordinary tenderness.

Since Britain has re-opened general access to the India of ancient and modern times, the old Indian language has attracted not a little European attention. Justly is it called *Sanskrit*, i. e., *perfect, finished.* In its structure and grammar, it closely resembles the Greek, but is infinitely more regular, and therefore more simple, though not less rich. It combines the artistic fulness indicative of Greek development, the brevity and nice accuracy of Latin; whilst, having a near affinity to the Persian and Germanic roots, it is distinguished by expression as enthusiastic and forcible as theirs. The ancient Indian language may be termed a priestly tongue in the fullest sense of the word, like the Hebrew, to which, however, it bears but slight similarity. Just as the leading nations of antiquity are characterized and classed according to the predominant tone of their social division into castes, being sacerdotal, warrior, or commercial peoples respectively; precisely so is it with languages. Among the idioms descended from kindred stock and connected family alliance, the old Latin is most like

Sanskrit in this sacerdotal feature. Greek constitutes the transition from this class to poetic, heroic language: the same element almost exclusively prevails in the Persian and Germanic dialects, whilst the Slavonic idioms, in so far as they really belong to this great family of languages, have probably issued from the slave-caste; and though originally possessing an equally artistic structure, have retained only such colloquial forms as are required for daily use.

Of all Indian poetry with which we have become familiar, the Sakuntala (translated by Sir W. Jones with the utmost fidelity) is most calculated to impress the student with a sense of the peculiar beauty of that branch of Eastern literature. There is no high and dignified arrangement—no strict severity of style, as in Greek tragedy. Tenderness of feeling, genial grace, artless beauty pervade the whole; and if, at times, the fondness for an indolent solitude, the delight excited by the beauty of nature, especially the vegetable kingdom, are here and there dwelt upon with a profusion of imagery and poetic ornament, it is only the adornment of innocence. The description is everywhere lucid and unpretentious, the diction marked by ingenuous simplicity. The lover of poetry may form, from this work, even in a German prose translation, divested of the charms of lyric metre, an idea of the genius of the Indian muse. It may be of some importance to criticism to decide whether Kalidas was contemporary with Virgil, as Sir William Jones assumes; or with Firdusi,* as would be the case if Vikramaditya, his patron, flourished at a later period: but as regards the intrinsic worth of the poetry, the question is altogether immaterial. The flowery verse of Kalidas is extremely unlike the simple grandeur of the older heroics: no less so the language. But the inner poetic spirit of both has much that is uniform: at any rate, the distinctive difference is by no means so striking as in the several periods and gradations of Grecian poetic development.

The account given by Indian mythology of the origin of

* Isnak Ben Scheriffschah, the most celebrated of Persian poets. Popular opinion fixes his date at 1020, A.D., in opposition to Sir W. Jones's theory: an opposition at once hazardous and difficult. His *Schanameh*, i.e. Book of Kings, is the history of Persia in 60,000 verses, at which the poet laboured 40 years.—*Transl. note.*

versification entirely corresponds with the general spirit of its poesy. Valmiki the sage, the reputed author of the other great epic, the Ramayan, is reported in the fable to have observed two loving birds building a nest in a delightful wood; in the midst of their cheerful toils, the male was struck dead by a missile from some rude and unseen hand. Sympathizing with the doleful plaints of the widowed bird, the sage poured forth his sorrows in rhythmical accents: hence elegy and distich, or *schloka*, ever after became the standard of Indian minstrelsy. We have already adverted to Aphorism, the original form common to every species of effort intended to endure in metrical literature, and in which the older doctrines of philosophy, as also poetic productions, are still found embodied; twin offspring, reposing, as it were, in the self-same cradle of inspiration. Indian aphorism is metrical, like Greek distich, but differs from the rhythmical vivacity of the latter in stricter evenness of harmony, and a process of thought almost symmetrical: this peculiar structure of the *schloka*, imparting to it an air of great placidity, which, combined with the other characteristic—dignified simplicity—makes it highly suitable for the fictitious legend and imagery of a pre-existing gigantic world. It will serve to illustrate the fable respecting the origin of verse, if we bear in mind that the essential doctrine of Indian philosophy maintained that suffering human souls were confined in those delicate animal forms. Tender delicacy of feeling, elegiac love, cast a halo over Indian poetry. The legendary minstrelsy of the country is based on the Titanic shapes and forms represented in the Indian rock-sculpture in all directions: but the whole is re-cast in the mould of harmonious softness, and is redolent of elegiac sweetness. In some such strains Valmiki sings of Rama, the popular Indian hero, how, roving in the woods and forests, a melancholy exile, he lost his beloved Sita, how he sought her in vain for many a long year, and at last found her. But in heroic and sublime descriptions Indian poetry is likewise rich, and the sunny, cheerful aspect of life is drawn in that comprehensive epic which, in an introductory hymn, is likened to an impetuous torrent: "issuing from the mountains of Valmiki and precipitating itself into the sea of Rama, which is altogether free from impurities, and rich in streams and flowers."

Gita Govinda is an eclogue of cheerful contents, breathing the ardent inspiration of love. It sings of Krishna,* wandering about on earth, like the Apollo of the Greeks, attended by nine shepherdesses. It is not, however, so much an Idyl as a series of dithyrambic love-songs, the exquisitely lyrical form of which Sir William Jones was not able to transfuse into his version. The import probably did not admit of a literal rendering: he only aimed at giving an epitome, a feeble copy of the original. But even from this the lover of poetry may form some idea of the beauty of the original. The well-known Indian fable-book, *Hitopadesa*, the source of so many other collections of fables, has been translated with almost verbal fidelity. Clearness of narrative is its distinguishing feature: a selection of beautiful passages from old poems, and maxims of wisdom, are harmoniously blended. The narrative, indeed, mainly subserves to string these aphorisms and poetic sentences together, as a poetical garland: intended to arouse reflection, as well as exercise the memory of youth. It need hardly be said that much which is repugnant to our notions is met with in this species of poetry.

The translations of Wilkins, Jones, and some of those who followed in their track, as Colebrooke, are the only ones to be relied upon.† But few French versions are satisfactory, since, having for the most part been rendered from some later idiom, remodelled in its structure, instead of the actual original, they are full of omissions, mutilations, and spurious additions. This is especially the case with the *Bagavadam*, the only one of the eighteen *Puranas* as yet translated. Other works, the efforts of those who were likewise ignorant of the purely indigenous Hindoo idiom, contain mere oral communications of the Bramins, irregularly mixed up with extracts from ancient or modern records. Of the ancient, Roger and many other works of travellers may be mentioned as the chief source, of the modern, the collection formed

* The name of this deity must not be confounded with that of a stream, which, rising in the Western Ghauts (East India) discharges its waters into the Bay of Bengal.—*Transl. note.*

† Of those who have laboured to extend a critical knowledge of Hindoo literature in Germany, the name of A. W. Schlegel deserves not to be entirely forgotten. [This is no empty flattery, or mere token of fraternal affection on the part of our author.—*Transl.*]

from Polier's* bequest. All the Mahometan treatises on Indian subjects are to be used with great caution, and with this discrimination, that where they treat, historically, of the present condition of the country, their testimony may be accepted as that of eye-witnesses: as in their full report of India made under the direction of the Emperor Akbar, and called Ayeen Akbery. Whilst all detailed accounts of older Indian philosophy, through the medium of analysis or translation, are to be regarded with considerable mistrust; owing to their defective criticism, their unscrupulous principles of translation, and their native incapacity to penetrate the depths of Indian thought. Hence *Oupnekhat* is one of the most obscure sources of information relative to Indian antiquities: nearly useless, and with which the student can the better afford to dispense, that there are other and better memorials. In order to be convinced of the utter worthlessness of this Persian bungling performance, it is only necessary to compare some of the passages with genuine translations from the *Upanischats* by Colebrooke. Careful discrimination and caution are especially needed throughout the vast extent of Indian literature, when it is remembered that the Bramins are in the habit of attributing high antiquity to all such works as refer to their mythology and philosophic system. Alexander, and Sandrocottus who was the successor of Porus, are repeatedly mentioned in Indian records. This circumstance, of itself, fixes their date. In other works there are allusions to early Mahometan times. Yet, care must be taken not to infer too hastily from any isolated passage, that the character of a whole work is genuine, or with equal rashness, to brand it as spurious.

That oscillation, which is so characteristic of the olden species of Greek literature, and which is inseparable from all oral tradition, is not so marked a feature of Indian literature. It may be assumed that even the oldest works possess uniform evenness and style. It is somewhat surprising to find no traces of hieroglyphs in connexion with a mythology visibly memorialized in clefts and rocky caverns throughout

* Born in 1741 at Lausanne. Thorough master of Arabic, Hindoo, Persic, and Sanskrit; forty-two Manuscripts in his own hand are to be found in the Paris Library. He composed an Indian Mythology in English, never printed but translated into French: Paris, 1809.—*Transl. note.*

the whole of India: whilst the Phœnician alphabet, as well as all derived from it, more especially those of Western Asia and Europe, probably all descended from one common stock, in their very shape and name betray a cognate reference to a previous system of signs, or hieroglyphics. The Indian alphabet bears no such internal evidence, its structure being, on the contrary, adverse to a supposition of this nature. This is in many ways remarkable, as also the adoption of decimal ciphers, the honour of which, next to letters the most important of human discoveries, has, with the common consent of historical authorities, been ascribed to the Hindoos. But if Indian literature has been more fortunate than the Greek in escaping the dangers arising from recitation, it has suffered much more from intentional corruption and anonymous remodelling. The more this is perceived to have taken place in some cases, the more reliable are the contents of those works which seem to be free from similar blemishes. The Puranas, a kind of mythologic legends, are most open to doubts of their genuineness. The two great Epics, before alluded to, are pretty generally received as genuine by all who are familiar with them. Of all well known books, the legislative records of Menu bear the most evident and palpable impress of high antiquity and unimpeachable originality. Whoever engages his attention in studies of this sort will have sensible proofs, both from the contents and the form of expression, that the work in question is a relic of remote ages, and of sterling value. Sir W. Jones, the greatest Orientalist of the eighteenth century, and the most distinguished philologist England ever produced, assigns to it a date somewhat subsequent to Homer, but still prior to the Roman laws of the Twelve Tables.* It appears to me to admit of little doubt that, with some other works, it has remained in its present form and unaltered state at least since the days of Alexander.

Next in rank, by way of introduction to the study of Indian philosophy, is *Bhagavatgita*, a didactic poem, translated by Wilkins. It contains the modern system of Indian thought, connected by a common origin with the doctrines

* These laws, introducing one uniform civil law for patricians and plebeians, themselves explain the probable period of their institution.—*Transl. note.*

of the religious sect found in India by the Greeks, and called by them Samaneans, in contradistinction to the Brachmans. It is an episode of the Epic—Mahabharat—but philosophical throughout. It may almost be styled a manual of Indian mysticism; it is in great repute, and the best exponent of the actual Indian mind. There is a remarkable peculiarity about this book, as regards the unmeasured praise bestowed on leading deities, either not found at all in Menu's laws, or, at most, passed over without comment: whilst the old doctrines, the Vedas, and polytheism generally, are roughly handled. The essential creed expounded is that of an absolute divine unity, absorbing all distinction, and engulphing all things. Yet, in so far as it is connected with mythology, it may be termed poetic pantheism, not unlike the Neo-Platonic philosophy, which, it will be remembered, combined, under somewhat similar circumstances, with the then popular belief, in its last throes, expecting by these means to revive its drooping energies. The worship of Vishnu and Krishna, now universally prevalent in Hindostan, differs only in one particular—that of retaining the division into castes—from the religion of Buddha and Fo, which was transplanted from India to Thibet and China, in the first century of Christianity, and disseminated throughout central and northern Asia.

Upon the whole, the appearance of this latter, historical, Buddha, whose religion, though all but extinct in Hindostan proper, is spread over so many countries to the South, North, and East of India, as to include more adherents than Christianity or Mahometanism, constitutes the great historical turning-point in the mental and religious culture of India; from which the lines of progress diverge, on the one hand to the antique, on the other to the improvements of modern times. Taking this as a central point, we shall be enabled more clearly to discern the gradations that obtain in the various systems of Hindoo philosophy: whilst, at present, we are familiar only with the Vedanta-doctrines that were in vogue during the last epoch: the collective literary riches of the country, of great extent and value, being, for the most part, one chaotic mass of ill-defined, unassorted materials. Those are to be condemned who engage in the unprofitable dispute as to the relative priority of Brama's or Buddha's religious system, since a purely historical investigation at

once decides the question at issue. The early, fabulous, accounts of Buddha's incarnations as little deserve our notice as the predictions of a coming Buddha, who, after the lapse of the specified thousands of years, is to be born of a Female Bramin. But the Reformer of the old Brama-worship, unanimously styled Gautama Buddha, who instituted the Nyaya-philosophy, is a real historic personage, recognized by Buddhists of the present day, in all countries, as the divine founder of their religion. We will not stop to examine the opinion, advanced by some antiquarians, relative to the existence of an earlier Buddha or Wodan, and the circumstances of his worship, alleged to have extended over the north of Asia and Europe; further than adverting to the detriment, resulting from such vague, unfounded statements, sustained by genuine historic information, in the course of investigating the particulars of ancient nature-worship. Gautama's name forms a great and decisive epoch in India: Socrates and Epicurus among the Greeks effected changes far less important: Zoroaster in Persia, Confucius in China, were not so generally revered as benefactors to their country: whilst in numerical extent of influence, Gautama Buddha swayed the destinies of more millions of human beings than the four together. In point of time, his followers in Ceylon, Siam, and the Burman empire agree in fixing the date of his epoch about 600 B.C. and the time of his disappearance from the earth 540 B.C.

When Alexander reached India, the Greeks found two distinct religious sects, fully established, with the respective appellations of Brachmans and Samaneans, the latter including, as we have before said, the adherents of Gautama. Some time must, necessarily, have elapsed before religious ferment subsided, and matters thus quietly settled down. The Buddhists inhabiting Thibet and China assign an earlier period to their founder, somewhere about 1000 B.C. But the other chronological theory is both amply sufficient to explain the state of matters in Alexander's time, and may be regarded as the more probable of the two. The main subject, however, for consideration, in reference to a thorough enquiry into the character of Indian development at that period, and of Hindoo literature on the whole, is the characteristic feature of Gautama's philosophy, and the other ancient systems of India. The most notable of these are known to

us very imperfectly, in consequence of the jealous feeling that has induced the prevalent system to push all rivals into the background: nevertheless, it has not succeeded in entirely annihilating memorials and reminiscences of incontestable authenticity that express the spirit of dogmas serving as the rallying-points of the several sects. To this point the researches of enquirers ought in future to tend, if there be a desire thoroughly to elucidate the obscurity of Indian antiquities. Among nations possessing indigenous philosophy and metaphysics, together with an innate relish for these pursuits, such as at present characterizes Germany, and, in olden times, was the proud distinction of Greece, Hindostan holds the first rank in point of time. On that account her philosophy deserves attention in preference to her other mental products. In reference to the various gradations of her systems, it will suffice here to ascertain the broad outlines, the pervading idea of her philosophy: not so much for arranging what may be considered as already established, as for furnishing a clue to particulars for future investigation. General testimony concurs in naming as the oldest Hindoo system, the Sankhya-doctrine, attributed to Kapila, whom an ingenious critic likens to Enoch in Genesis: it is to him that we must undoubtedly look for the most ancient philosophy of primeval times. The two principles it embodies, not as antagonist, like light and darkness in the Persian philosophy, but in close union—Puruschottama and Prakriti, —the latter corresponding to the Maya of the other systems, are not to be understood as God and Nature merely, but as metaphysical generals—Spirit and Soul: in the combination of which everything consists, and by their junction all things are produced. This doctrine of Spirit and Soul, the two principles of being, forasmuch as spirit can only be known in and by the soul, is a pure spiritualism, such as naturally and spontaneously proceeded from the psychological views of the first sages. It is not difficult to mark the progress by which the primitive doctrine, deviating from its original simplicity, came to degenerate into poetical polytheisms, which, resting on an imperfect or misconstrued sidereal basis, became the source of heathen mythology stamped with a common impress among peoples the most remote from each other in time and place, and which was affected only by local peculiarities. India is preeminently distinguished for

the many traits of original grandeur of thought, and of the wonderful remains of immediate knowledge, as well as of the sacred traditions of the primitive world. Of this poetical polytheism, subsequently set in scientific order, and constituting abstract conceptions, the most decided materialism was a natural and almost necessary consequence: and the copious list of varied material systems proves that this was the case in more than one epoch of Hindostan. Many celebrated nations of antiquity remained stationary at this point of material paganism, without further progress. Here and there the very magnitude of the evil elicited its own remedy, the boundless confusion and extravagance of heathen doctrines itself demanding and producing energetic reform. This was precisely the case in India, at a period when other nations too shewed symptoms of a similar spirit, about the sixth century before the Christian era, when the renowned Gautama, the last historic Buddha, effected an entire change in religious as well as philosophic tenets. The Nyaya-doctrine, attributed to Gautama, from all that we can now learn, was an Idealism, constructed with a purity and logical consistency of which there are few other instances, and to which the Greeks never attained: it approximates somewhat to scientific Atheism, but of a more abstract character, and not at all like our practical notions of the same, since it accords with the severest external morality. Several accounts of this doctrine met with in Chinese records entirely coincide with this view. It is possible that many of the false sects of Nastiks or Nihilists in India were led by the idealistic doctrine of an absolute *nothing* to attach themselves to the original, purer and better, Nyaya.

Of the classic systems of Indian philosophy, that of Mimansa, advocating as it does the principle of movement and activity in preference to absolute repose, seems to approach very nearly to the Nyaya Idealism. Diametrically opposed to this is the now prevalent and, if we may so call it, orthodox Vedanta-doctrine, though it, too, indirectly originated in the period of Gautama's reform. Embracing the positive elements of Hindoo religion and tradition, this doctrine is, virtually, an attempt to rescue ancient Brama-worship and its associated mythology from Buddhist innovation, by means of a spiritual interpretation of the Vedas, as the name itself

shews. The actual philosophic import of Vedanta-doctrine is easily gathered: it is pure pantheism, most easily adapting itself to every species of heathen mythology, especially as the Idealism which can with difficulty be maintained in its entire strictness, so easily inclines to it, as persons versed in philosophical history well know from other instances. This pantheism, according to the Vedanta-doctrine, pervading the whole of Indian literature since Vyasa's time, is satisfactorily epitomized in Bhagavatgita, and is abundantly known to us, inasmuch as all classic Hindoo works, in every branch of literature, are more or less composed, or at any rate remodelled, in the spirit of this doctrine. The fourth Veda, Atharvan Ved, and its appendix, the mystic Upanishats, are framed in the Vedanta-doctrine. So are all the Puranas; as also all that is ordinarily attributed to Vyasa, a name designating the epoch when this doctrine grew to be of universal application. It has already been observed that the Mahabharat has come down to us only in the revised form of a Vedanta edition: it is not improbable that the Ramayan underwent similar revision. We are not competent to express an opinion on the merits of the first three Vedas: Menu's book of laws seems to be uninfluenced by the Vedanta-doctrine, and this fact is strongly in favour of its comparative antiquity and originality. According to reliable evidence, the works treating of the other systems of Sankhya- and Nyaya-doctrine, which the Vedanta attacks, have not all perished: on the contrary, a tolerable number are still extant, though as yet they have not received the attention they deserve. The points of dispute in the several philosophic systems are strikingly declared in Prabodh Chandrodaya (the rising moon of knowledge) a philosophical comedy, exhibiting many interesting traits of the older doctrines, and from the pen of a Vedanta writer. These elder systems merit especially the closest attention, and we cannot recommend them too earnestly to the student of Indian antiquities, in order that by a closer acquaintance with them, he may attain a clearer conception of the progressive steps of the intellectual development of India and of the most important epochs of its thinking and philosophy; he will thus be enabled to form more exact notions of what I have here only slightly indicated, perhaps in some

measure differently, and to supply what is wanting from the original sources.

Let us now consider the more prominent peculiarities of the religion and philosophy of Hindostan in reference to their influence on life generally, and as compared with similar or approximate ideas in our European world and creed.

Those Indian Recluses or Gymnosophists who appeared so strange to the Greeks, belong to both the Hindoo philosophic systems—Bramics and Samaneans or Buddhists—emanating from conceptions common to both. Their retired habits, their withdrawal from the world for the purposes of devotional contemplation, even their rigid penances, are vividly suggestive of the earlier Christian hermits in Egypt. But there is still a striking difference. Seclusion from the world and its concerns in a certain degree is so natural, that upon it the sages of Greece wholly based their mode of life. Critics have not been wanting who have compared this exclusion, especially as adopted by certain sects of Greek philosophers, with that of monastic societies. Not merely Plato, but even Aristotle, give the preference to mental occupation, contemplation, and reflection, over external, practical activity. But if increased scope was thus afforded for the perfection of individuality, it is evident that the community were sufferers from the withdrawal of faculties that could least be spared from the general store. Again, the thought that *self* must be merged in order to attain to higher perfection, is in itself anything but objectionable: but the self-imposed mortifications and tortures of those Indian Recluses have a tendency to deaden the faculties, to lead to the verge of insanity, and, so far from purifying the spirit and temper, are calculated to promote vanity and pride rather than humility. In conformity with the genius of Christianity, withdrawal from social life, its obligations and privileges, should ever be joined to activity, not only of mind, but of the heart; so that the social stream may in some manner be replenished with some of the constituents abstracted from its elements. The collective civil energies are, for the most part, concentrated on a few special purposes, and a limited sphere of duty. Much is left to private enterprise seeking to extend its operations, wherever opportunity may offer. In the primitive, warlike, ages of nations, even the patronage of science and of the

peaceful arts comes under the operation of such an influence. And when the state has so far progressed in the development of its polity as to include these things within the circle of its obligations, inasmuch as it stands in need of them, there is still infirmity of every kind and degree to be regulated and assisted; but if all this be accomplished, it is then necessary to educate the citizen for other than mere civil requirements: in times of general corruption to maintain truth in full integrity, to bridge the past to the future. Such is the essential distinction that obtains between Christian clergy who have renounced the world for the better culture of their moral nature, and the passive, degenerate torpor of Hindoo recluses and devotees.

In addition to this common fondness for a solitary contemplative life, there are other singular points of resemblance between Indian and Christian practices. The Indian notion of a Trinity, sometimes adduced in proof, is by no means to be referred hereto. Something similar, a sort of triune elementary force is found in the conceptions of many nations, as in the majority of systems of philosophers. It is the universal form of existence communicated by a great first Cause to all its productions, the impress of Divinity, so to speak, stamped on spiritual thoughts as on physical shapes. The Indian doctrine of triple primary power is also quite different from that manifested in Christianity, and, as now understood and expounded in Hindostan, most inconsistent, since the spirit of destruction is included in that of a supreme Being. In thus uniting the ideas of destructive, with creative and preservative Power, Hindoo belief is only a little less monstrous than that of Persia, which made the principle of destruction a powerful opponent, if not superior to a benevolent Deity. The doctrine that "God is All in All" implies, with them, that he is the originator of every evil thing, as well as of every thing that is good.

The received opinion respecting the Incarnation falls short of harmonizing consistency in India, on account of the multitude of fables with which it is associated. A greater amount of harmony is evinced in the feeling that predominates in the mode of life, and is evident in poetic representations, and which I have sought to pourtray. The poetical, and other works of the Greeks, too often assume an air of

artificial repose, so that those, who are both competent and disposed to appreciate these finished master-pieces of literature, have been struck with the mere artistic feeling that animates them; and have regretted the absence of a deeper pathos in situations where the moral affections and emotions of conscience might have been expected. Repentance and Hope may indeed be termed eminently Christian feelings, that higher hope which is set upon Eternity. Allied therewith are all feelings referring to the contrast between our present condition and original perfection. In the creed of India, the sympathetic consciousness of guilt is the strongest of all feelings. It will be remembered that we have previously spoken of this universal sympathy of creation on the commission of crimes. The still voice of the heart—the Hindoo periphrasis for conscience—is undoubtedly a sense connecting us with an unseen world, which, but for this means, would be utterly concealed from our ken. But if the voice of this secret monitor is, at times, drowned in the hum and turmoil of busy life, in other cases it may be excited too strongly, so that its power is overborne by the violence of the impressions. It is to conceptions and emotions of this sort that the Indian creed refers the varied phenomena of life, and shapes the aspect of nature herself. In all surrounding objects, the Hindoo beholds sentient beings like himself, suffering for some offence committed in a prior stage of existence, racked with sad memories and painful forebodings, fettered and imprisoned, and moaning to him in piteous accents of recognition and of grief. But for Love's balsam and the sweet tenderness of sympathy, the spirit would droop beneath its load of sorrow.

Resemblance between the moral philosophy of India and of Christianity is most apparent in the view taken of the soul's regeneration when, illumined by Divine light, it quits its former life, and, like the rejuvenated phœnix, rises from its own ashes. This idea of regeneration is so prevalent throughout that country, that the Bramins desire to be called by no other name than "twice-born," in a similarly spiritual acceptation. But here again there is a wide distinction. With respect to hereditary privileges or advantages, Christianity never invades these when established by nature and reason; ignorant fanatics alone have sought to

consecrate a baseless fabric of political equality under the sanction of its awful name. On the other hand, Christianity has never ceased to assert that all men are equal in the sight of God: a principle that, of all others, is the noblest basis of liberty, mental as well as physical. But when the prompting of nature, the very gift of Heaven, showered down on the meanest and most low-born of this world equally with the occupants of thrones, is appropriated, as an hereditary prerogative, to some particular caste, it is evident that intolerable arrogance on the one part, and a degrading sense of inferiority on the other part, must necessarily ensue.

This similarity, notwithstanding concomitant error and disfigurement, existing between certain Hindoo and Christian conceptions, must not be regarded as entirely novel or borrowed, being, partly at least, established by historical testimony and really of old standing. Such an anticipation, however hazy and imperfect, of Truth, need not surprise us. Just as little as any similarities there may be found between the tenets of other Asiatics and Mosaic traditions, or the Allegories of Solomon, would justify the conclusion that these nations, like ourselves, had had a written version of the Scriptures before their eyes, from which they copied. Tributary streams, no longer altogether limpid, still mark the source whence they took their rise. The germs of all truth and virtue are implanted in man, the image of his Maker. Imperfect presentiments and emotions long foreshadow the coming reality. The early champions of Christianity found so much in the life and teaching of Socrates and Plato corresponding to their own notions, that they did not hesitate to pronounce their doctrines Christian. Just as the phenomena of nature are connected by the bond of a common vitality, and as rational thoughts follow each other in continuous sequence, so also are all truths referring to Divine things, linked in harmonious, though secret, unison. He to whom one thing is given is competent to experience higher perceptions: man cannot, of himself, produce *that*, any more than he could have fashioned his own mortal body. There are, indeed, trains of thought self-originating and created as it were, by man's own powers: but such barren, useless thoughts are of a subtile cast, which are aimless and lose themselves in their own mazes. Truth and light dwell

not in them, any more than, in morals, the fire of supercilious arrogance or indignant vanity can be called a pure flame. If it be objected that further investigation and presentiment of the whole from a knowledge of particulars are ambiguous and unsafe, we would answer that similar ambiguity and equal uncertainty everywhere attend the erratic footsteps of the enquirer after truth. The great picture of human development becomes more finished, and the history of truth and error more full, in proportion as our cognizance extends to nations that have a peculiar genius of their own; amongst the remotest Asiatic tribes, that which in our Western world was isolated and detached, is found combined. Thus whilst in regard to actual creed and religion the Persians manifestly resemble the Hebrews, more than they do any other people of antiquity—the practical element of their doctrine is in obvious affinity with Northern mythology, and many of their customs likewise coincide with those of the ancient Germans. In Indian mythology, which closely resembles that of Egypt and Greece, moral and philosophical conceptions bearing on certain Christian tenets abound. The communication of ideas between India and other nations having a share in a most ancient tradition and knowledge was doubtless of a reciprocal character. There is incontestable evidence of the Persians having held northern Hindostan under their sway before the time of Alexander, or at least of their having visited it, from time to time, in the capacity of conquerors. The doctrines of these warrior-bands were disseminated over India with the greater facility that, though differing in polity and system, both the vanquished and their masters were allied by the ties of a common idiom and descent. Alexander's expedition and the arrival of the Greeks, together with their brief rule in that country, were probably not without some degree of influence on the national spirit and taste. In Greek culture the close observer will find more of the foreign element than at first meets the eye, on account of the happy freedom and versatile genius of the Greeks who stamped whatever they borrowed with an impress all their own; so in India, an all-pervading idea modified, if it did not transform, all that was imported from the mental resources of other lands. If in earlier times, Hindostan received nothing from Egypt

in return for former benefits, it should be borne in mind that the principles of Christianity were transplanted to that country from Egypt, a circumstance that must, in some degree, have influenced later Indian writers. The first dissemination of Christianity along the coast of Malabar is ascribed to Apostolic times, and dates, at least, from the early Nestorian* period. There is likewise historical testimony to the effect that, about the end of the fourth, or the commencement of the fifth, century, a Christian mission proceeded from Egypt to India. Commercial relations, too, existed between the two countries. So long as Armenia, Syria, Egypt, and Ethiopia were in the undisturbed enjoyment of Christian privileges, and either formed part of the Byzantine empire, or were on terms of the strictest amity with that power, the connection of the West with the Eastern world, through the medium of Constantinople, must have been of a facile and permanent character. The last writer that has recorded what he himself saw of India, found the Indian seas and harbours studded with Persian sails, in the sixth century.† On land, too, Persian power prevailed just before Mahomet's time, narrowing the boundaries of the Eastern empire. When Egypt and Assyria were at length wrested from the Byzantine empire, under the administration of Mahomet's successors, communication with the far East was, for a time, interrupted, until its re-establishment at the period of the Crusades.

LECTURE VI.

RETROSPECT TO EUROPE.—INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF ROME.—CHARACTERISTIC OF THE NEW TESTAMENT—THE NATIONS OF THE NORTH.—GOTHIC EPICS —ODIN, RUNIC WRITINGS, THE EDDA.

THE period during which Oriental systems made their way

* Nestorius was made Patriarch of Constantinople in 428 through the friendship of Theodosius; he is known as the scourge of heretics, especially Arians and Macedonians.—*Transl. note.*

† Mr. Lockhart's version has, doubtless through inadvertence, *sixteenth* instead of *sixth*.—*Transl. note.*

into Europe, and battled with each other, extends from Hadrian to Justinian. The predominant influence of Eastern philosophy was shewn even in the early ages of Christianity. The fanatical sects that swarmed in the first centuries were, for the most part, such as desired to amalgamate Oriental mythology, and especially Persian dogmas, with the purity of a faith that could not possibly entertain the introduction of such elements. Even the foremost of the earliest Christian philosophers—Origen—was attached to the doctrine of transmigration of souls and other notions not in accordance with the spirit of Christianity. Neo-Platonic philosophy, coalescing with the ancient creed and energetically resisting the progress of Christianity, exhibited the influence of Egyptian taste. This philosophy was a chaotic mixture of astrology, metaphysics, and mythology. Inclination to the secret practice of magic arts increased; a practice involving not merely gross errors, but likewise the commission of hideous and revolting crimes. Such was the philosophy which the Emperor Julian proposed to substitute in the stead of Christianity, and exalt to the dignity of a dominant authority. As Christianity made progress, its contest with old beliefs grew fiercer and more extensive. The natural and mutual antipathy of hostile creeds is, in itself, sufficient to account for the earlier persecutions suffered by the Christians. But the systematic, methodical plans of Diocletian, in the third century, betray a deliberate determination to extirpate Christianity at any cost. Christianity had now, however, struck too deep a root to be removed, as was proved in the following* reign of Constantine; in whose time it made very decided progress, although this should not be altogether ascribed to his, or indeed to any individual, support, being attributable rather to the expansion of latent energies. Grateful posterity has, however, placed it to his credit, and even veiled with it his imperfections. Once more the ancient mythology found a champion in the person of the Emperior Julian, whose great talents cannot be denied. His attempts to subvert Christianity were subtile and clever:

* The period between Diocletian and Constantine was a species of interregnum; Constantius and Galerius, Maxentius and Severus, succeeded as *Augusti.—Transl. note.*

warned of the futility of resorting to open violence by the experience of Diocletian, though similar violence was then scarcely practicable, he attacked it with the weapons of ridicule-but the expedient on which he most relied was that of separa, ting Christianity from all high intellectual culture, and thus to injure it by rendering it contemptible. The ingenuity of his devices, though not attended with success, has obtained the applause of many who, in modern times, have sympathised with his design. But when his panegyrists take into account the scientific superstition to which Julian had devoted his mind and heart, they can scarcely fail to feel some scruples respecting the justice of their encomiums.

When Christianity had come out victorious from this last attack on its existence, it had yet to weather the opposition of the philosophers, who, on their expulsion by Justinian, took refuge in Persia, and were thence scattered abroad. Thus ended the struggle of Christianity with Paganism, under the Emperor we have just named.

I have hitherto attempted to sketch three distinct periods of literature. Of these the first two, namely, the flourishing era of Grecian genius, from Solon to the Ptolemies, and the best and strictly classic period of Rome, from Cicero to Trajan, were described with comparative facility; it being almost sufficient in their case, to note individual writers in due sequence, in order to exhibit the spirit of the whole, and depict its gradual growth, the brilliant splendour of its zenith, and the gloom of its decline and extinction.

Circumstances were materially different in the third period, from Hadrian to Justinian. Mere form and representation, the lustre of individual names, were not of so great moment here as the general development of philosophy. To exhibit the great conflict of the world of antiquity with the newly formed Christian Era: to pourtray the influences of a creed transplanted from Asia to Europe, and the ferment produced in Greece, as well as Rome, by varied oriental bigotry: this is a theme requiring infinitely more pains to do it justice. In depicting this contest of oriental systems, and Asiatic tradition generally, it was necessary to treat of nations whose literature has been entirely lost, as the Egyptians: of some who like the Persians, have bequeathed to us only the imperfect compilations of later times; of others, as

The Hebrews, who convey to us an excellent idea of their literature and poetry, by means of their sacred writings, but which we are wont to view from a totally different standpoint, for which the mere literary and poetical view is not always needed; the Indians again, of whose copious literary treasures we are all but ignorant, save through suspicious channels of information.

But it is no less important that we should be in possession of the general tenor of the thoughts and conceptions of the numerous Pagan and Christian authors who flourished in Greece and Rome during the period from Hadrian to Justinian. In sketching this era, if the characteristic features of each individual writer were delineated with elaborate minuteness, there would be great danger of losing sight of the main point under consideration. All kinds of literary information and facilities were much increased in this age: perhaps at no time was the spirit of enquiry so active, at no time was truth more gloriously vindicated, or on the other hand more errors and enthusiastic pretensions more rife. In every species of learning and talent the age was truly rich: golden harvests of tradition and invention were never so abundant. Our praise, however, cannot be extended to any peculiar prominence of individual genius, or general excellence of style. In poetry, to which all other branches of literature were but secondary, nothing new or truly great appeared. There were orators of distinction, for this faculty was never lost among the Greeks. The highest praise which can be awarded to the best orators of this age is, that they recalled the palmiest days of antiquity, and could stand a comparison with their predecessors, even in reference to the language which still retained its living bloom. To the great Christian orators, such as Basil and Chrysostom, this additional encomium is justly due—they did not, like the Sophists, abuse the art of rhetoric, in the promotion of error or frivolous pursuits, but employed it for the development of the holiest truths, and of the purest morality. In the most distinguished authors of this period, then, both critics and philosophers, the subject and not the style claims our greatest attention. This remark is applicable to Christian writers, who, in their zealous endeavours to serve the general cause, were unambitious of the graces of language, no less than to the Pagan. How

can Plotinus, Porphyry, or even Longinus be named as authors by the side of Plato? And yet the thinking of these men exercised considerable influence over their own age, and has continued to influence posterity. The distinctions of individual mind may be said to have been engulphed in the whirlpool of universal excitement. There are literary epochs when the genius of an individual attains to the highest pitch of perfection both in style and art, and towers above his contemporaries; there are others when the individual force of thought merges in the concentrated whole, and is lost in the development of general opinion. In political history similar phenomena are visible: whilst, at one period, nations form themselves and emerge from the midst of chaotic confusion, —at another, there is a regular, organic action, by means of which systems and states progress towards perfection. The history of literature, like the history of the world, if it would do justice to the human mind, must take cognizance of both kinds of action—spasmodic, creative state of chaotic fermentation, and steady, unimpassioned development.

On proceeding to analyse the mental powers that were enlisted in the all-important contest, both sides appear nearly equally matched, as far as talents and knowledge are concerned, with occasional alternations: so that the issue of the strife in reality rests on the intrinsic and inherent virtue of the cause in dispute, and must not be ascribed to the respective merits or defects of the individuals engaged. Among the Greeks paganism was, at first, in the ascendant; Grecian literature was still surrounded by a halo of setting glory in the reign of Antoninus, when the champions of Christianity scarcely ventured to come forward with apologies for their persecuted faith and their calumniated lives. The Greeks soon manifested their superiority of intellect, more particularly when espousing the cause of the new creed: they gave Christianity her first thinkers and learned defenders, her great orators and complete historians. Talent and learning were gradually arrayed on her side. Yet, even after Christianity had established for itself a recognized position in the State, there were still men of eminence on the side of Paganism, and those philosophers who, to the last, combated Christianity, and made a final effort to support

the sinking creed of their fathers, were men distinguished for their genius and erudition.

The case was different in the Roman West; here a handful of Pagans were opposed to collective Latin literature ranged under the banners of Christianity. In profundity of acquirements it cannot, for a moment, compare with its sister-literature of Greece. The Romans never displayed any genius for the higher branches of philosophy and metaphysics: their language was no congenial soil for the cultivation of these products. This is as perceptible in St. Augustin* as in Cicero; neither was it until the Latin language had ceased to be a living tongue that it could be brought by main force to express, even imperfectly, those subtle distinctions and nicer shades of thought which the Greeks, who were by birth Dialecticians and Metaphysicians, easily compassed. The grandest and most characteristic work of later Roman literature—in which St. Augustin has endeavoured to embody Christian views of human destiny and society, in juxta-position to Plato's Republic and his social Ideal—is not so much a metaphysical as a moral treatise; though a critical review of older systems, it is such as we should be disposed to term a theory of mankind, a philosophy of history. In the period of Christian history likewise, the peculiar practical spirit and strong common-sense of the Romans ever presented a marked contrast to the subtility and artistic skill of the Greeks. These Roman characteristics eventually produced a sound legislative system and method which, coupled with the free spirit of the Germanic races who conquered and re-created Rome, largely contributed to prepare for modern Europe a happy development and an intellectual elevation.

Christianity, as received by the Germans from the Romans, on the one hand, and the free spirit of the North, on the other, were the two elements out of which a new world proceeded, and hence mediæval literature was generally twofold,

* Of St. Augustin Niebuhr says, "his is a truly philosophic mind, as strongly actuated by a yearning after truth as any of the great philosophers; his language also is very noble. He is by no means witty, like St. Jerome; but he is eloquent, and in many places admirable." St. Augustin himself says that the Punic language was his mother tongue.—*Transl. note.*

a Christian Latinity, common to the whole of Europe and intended merely as a vehicle for the preservation and extension of knowledge,—and an especial, more poetical literature, in the idiomatic tongue of each respective nation. Hence the efforts of the early patrons of mental culture in modern Europe, such as Theodoric the Goth, Charlemagne, and Alfred, were necessarily directed to two objects; it being requisite, in the first place, to maintain inviolate the inheritance of all the information handed down in Latin, and, then, to educate the people by means of their native language, to preserve the poetic memorials of the past; to give the language a more precise form, and by a more varied use of it, to make it available for philosophic and scientific purposes. The poetic or creative, national portion of mediæval literature presents the greater attractions, yet we must not wholly pass over the later element therein, for it is the link connecting modern Europe with antiquity.

Let us endeavour to present under another aspect the inner connection and points of junction of the principal spheres included in our view of human development and genius. The Greeks continue to be our models in the arts and sciences; the Romans, on the other hand, though they only form the transition between the old and the new world, served the middle ages as an immediate and direct source of information, until the higher and sometime hidden, living spring gushed forth. The Northern feeling, embodied in legendary story, was the root on which the new genius of the Western nations was engrafted. Christianity, not only in itself, but in its written code, the Gospel, was the light from above that illumined the other elements, purified and moulded them for the furtherance of art and science. The New Testament is noticeable here the rather that its literary influence was incalculably great, both as regards the middle ages and even in later times, in point of form and contents, on morals and philosophy, on the liberal arts and poetry. The Divine light, shining through the transparent simplicity of the Gospel, fused the artistic faculty of the Greeks, the practical wisdom of the Romans, and the prophetic depth of the Hebrews, into a complete whole for the advancement of science, and the conduct of life. The Bible, on whose organic structure we commented above as far as

concerned the Hebrew portion, becomes a complete and connective volume by the addition of the New Testament. It is indeed a perfect *Book*, consisting, in the Old Covenant of forty and five spiritual members or organs: and in the New, of seven and twenty living members and spiritual organs. As in the old Testament, so in the new, certain portions relate to the eternal Word of life, and others to the community of the faithful or the Church. The mystery of that Love by means of which the living Word was manifested personally on earth, in due time, in the midst of the world's development, is recorded in the Gospel in a fourfold manner. So, in the old Covenant, the number of the Cherubim over the Ark that guarded the mystery of the Divine promise was also four; four living streams gushed forth from one source in Paradise: and this seems to be the essential form of the manifestation of Divine excellence and goodness in visible embodiment. So that we cannot help being astonished at those persons who cannot understand this most natural and intelligible fourfoldness of the Gospel; or who find a difficulty in it which they treat as a curious problem, and attempt to solve it by some ingenious hypothesis. That which is found distinct and separate in Moses and the Psalms, namely, revelation, allegory, inspiration, and the living, all-pervading feeling of the Word,—is blended in the Gospel, which delineates the life of the Incarnate Word. The other books of the New Testament directly refer to the Christian community and Church; in regular series describing its formation and constitution in the Acts of the Apostles, and then delineating its agency and life in a doctrine full of love and in a hope full of faith in a cycle of various Epistles, and presenting the destinies of the Church for all coming time and future development in the Apocalypse. Subjects which in the Prophets of the Old Testament are not treated of separately, the doctrine of salvation by the Spirit, and admonitory visions, clear rules of life, and veiled prophecy are distinctly unfolded in the Epistles and the Apocalypse: so that the writings of the Old and New Testaments correspond in all points, and are mutually supplementary. The Prophet of the New Covenant gives the complete finish to the entire Divine work, and this mysterious book of the future forms with Genesis or the

revelation of the beginning, the key for the sacred arch of Scripture, in the circumference of which the fourfold Gospels form the bright centre of the whole, of which the beginning and the end contain the key to the deeper meaning; so that to whomsoever these two manuals of the first and last books of the Bible are still strange or quite obscure, he ought to suspend his judgment and be silent in acknowledged ignorance, when the question relates to the scientific explanation of revelation in its full extent. The form and style of the New Testament is incomparably simpler than that of the Old, and this very transparent simplicity, truthfully reflecting the Divine attributes, which has made it *the Book* of the people (as in a certain sense we may call it) has also served to impress its own indelible stamp upon the whole train of the subsequent development of the human mind and the teaching of modern Christianity. The spirit of Allegory is no less prevalent in the New than in the Old covenant; especially that species of it called Parable, which in the former is more extensively applied, and may be said to constitute the childlike teaching of the Gospel. If Aphorism is the natural form of every Divine revelation in the plain expression of the eternal Word, as a written *Fiat*, Parable is the human, figurative investiture of Divine maxims. The Spirit of eternal truth is not manifested in the artistic allegories of poets, or in the profound secresy of natural symbols: but clad in the popular allegory of real life and its daily phenomena, as in the simple garb of childhood. Parable, in its simplest form, as adopted and applied in the Bible, has also a peculiar Divine impress, which it is impossible to copy or counterfeit. It is more particularly in the childlike similes and allegories of Parable that the Gospel has become a type for all later legends, whilst the latter, in their turn, have been the general storehouse from which Christian art and poetry have been ultimately supplied. Care must, however, be taken not to confound the inner sublimity of Divine intelligence, as manifested in the New Testament, with external simplicity of representation. Just as the lamb of patient Love is hidden beneath the lion-like anger of old-Testament denunciation, in like manner the writings of the new Covenant display the eagle glance of penetration veiled by meek and lamb-like mildness. And here, on this

stand-point, we meet with the third and highest mode of interpreting and understanding Holy Writ (as mentioned above) founded on the mysterious communion of the soul with God, when the eternal Word renders it intelligible in his own light. For all the doctrine and knowledge of the living Word may be understood and explained according to the three-fold relation of the Word—the historical, eternal, and internal. But in the highest form of intelligence the Word is no longer conceived of as divided and limited in the human understanding, but entire and living he operates on those who know him as the Word of Life and bring forth the fruits of life. Then the manifold meaning of Scripture which is required in the first stages of [Divine] knowledge, vanishes, and when the end is found, it is resolved into the simple sense of the soul united to God, according to the full light of the living Word, which is described in the Scriptures as the everlasting unwritten Gospel, by which that which remains concealed must be explained, when the time shall arrive.

Let us now resume the thread of history, and proceed to examine the condition of intellectual culture in the later times of Rome.

The final destinies of the Latin tongue, still a living idiom, which exerted so great an influence on the relations and peculiar character of its affiliated *Romance** languages, and likewise on the poetical spirit of the middle ages, were as follows. The translation of the Bible into Latin created an epoch altogether new in that language, constituting a late and, in some instances, a rich aftercrop of Latin literature. On the extinction of the old literature, of which few ornaments survived the reign of Trajan, there was an almost universal literary dearth, until the period when Christian writers made their appearance, in the fourth and fifth centuries; scarcely any other works were composed in the Roman tongue during that period, and those of little moment.

* This appellation includes Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, &c. In a more limited philological sense it applies only to one or two dialects, such as the Rhætian, the Rumonic, the Wlachic, being a mixture, in nearly equal parts, of Sclavonian and Latin. The people who now adopt these dialects still call themselves Romans, or, in their idiom, Rumanje.—*Transl. note.*

There is no good authority for inducing us to believe that time or accident has robbed us of any that then existed. The Greeks were once more predominant. If, by the side of Christian writers, a sprinkling of Pagan historians and poets made a creditable appearance in the centuries named, it is entirely attributable to a spirit of rival emulation, or to the new impetus with which the promulgators and supporters of Christianity quickened the language and its literature. Thus it was once more an external foreign impulse that roused the Roman mind from lethargic apathy to efforts of linguistic perfection. Considered purely on its own merits, this imitation of Oriental expression, of which it ever after bore obvious traces, might have been favourable to the Latin tongue, if not more advantageous than copying Greek poetry and rhetoric, as it had done in classic days, and which was ever attended with more or less inconvenience. The artificial intricacy of prose, which had almost become natural to the Greeks, was at all times foreign to Roman genius. Some few leading writers succeeded in overcoming the difficulty, and attained to a noble simplicity of style; but the great majority lost themselves in the mazes of construction, in their endeavours to imitate Greek models. Roman poets, too, present a hard and obscure appearance, on assuming the ornate charms of the Grecian muse. The metres they adopted from Greek standards never became popular, that is, they never really lived in the hearts and memories of the people, with the exception of hexameter or elegiac verse. This was especially the case with the more artificial metres, and it may have been one reason why Horace, who in our eyes possesses such irresistible graces, was not in high repute among his countrymen of the succeeding generation, nay, was scarcely remembered by them. The Roman language was originally enriched with a few patriotic epics and was then cast wholly in the mould of jurisprudence; it thus gradually unfolded an exclusively practical character, suited alike to the stern realities of war and the political institutions of peaceful times. But this prosaic development prospered at the expense of the bolder flights of fancy: poetry could not forego her old simplicity, even in the position of words and structure of periods, without injury. Both in imagery and style, an ap-

proximation to Oriental modes of expression could not be otherwise than beneficial to the language generally,—but for the hurtful interference of other circumstances—especially when sublimity, as in the sacred books of the Hebrews, is throughout associated with ingenuous simplicity. For the purpose of illustrating this remark, it is only necessary to refer to the Latin translation of the Psalms, denominated the Italic. I appeal to the feelings and judgment of all who are able to appreciate the ancient sublimity and energy of the Roman tongue, do they not here recognize all the features that remind them of both these qualities? I question if any Latin imitations of Greek poetry were, at any period, so eminently successful or breathed such enthusiastic inspiration, as this translation of sacred Hebrew Song, the phraseology and arrangement of which are alike admirable. Even in regard to melody, the Latin tongue has here displayed such distinguished excellence that all great masters of harmony have, down to our own times, adopted it in preference to Italian, its own daughter, for the loftier branches of music. The cause of the corruption and decay of the Latin language before the irruption of the Germanic races was owing to the gradual decline of metropolitan Rome, and the superior influence of the provinces. Rome, which though it had lost the sceptre of worldly power, continued to hold the keys of ecclesiastical supremacy, ceased more and more to be the arbiter of taste and language; especially after Constantine had transferred the seat of empire to Byzantium. In the writers who flourished under the first Cæsars, and who were natives of Spain, many have thought they could discern certain traits of peculiarity: as though there had been a consciousness that Latin was not their mother tongue. The antitheses of Seneca, and the turgid diction of Lucan, have been compared with the prevalence of a similar taste on the part of certain modern Spanish writers. This must necessarily have been still more conspicuous in the case of early Christian Latin authors, who were, for the most part, Africans, and at a later period Gauls. Doubtless many varieties of Roman dialects existed, at an early period, in the various provinces of that vast empire. In Italy itself the rural population probably used an idiom differing widely from the written language or from the more re-

fined speech of the capital. To this idiom, the so-called *lingua rustica*, Italian critics are wont to trace the origin of their own tongue, rather than to any introduction of foreign elements occasioned by Germanic intermixture. Rome, having been not only the chief but perhaps the sole abode of purity of language, probably retained this distinction to the last, though in an inferior degree. Of Christian Latin authors, St. Jerome, though not born yet educated in Rome, is the first in point of masculine eloquence. Whilst it cannot be expected that in the fifth century the language should compete with the polished elegance of Cicero, there is yet much in St. Jerome's style calculated to remind one of the old Roman vigour and classic spirit. When the Goths, in considerable numbers, settled in Italy and particularly in Rome, the language, spoken as it was by so many to whom it was a foreign tongue, underwent great changes. Though no blending with foreign idioms had actually taken place, the alteration was so complete that the native Roman had to take great care, if he would express himself with that nice precision and purity to which he had been accustomed. This characteristic is clearly discernible in the writers who lived in the time of Theodoric the Goth, the last that can be included within the pale of antiquity, and who may be said to have formed the transition to the middle ages.

It must be borne in mind that, like every great change, the introduction of Christianity, notwithstanding the beneficial results that ensued, of necessity caused a certain interruption to the progress of art and literature. Less in the former of these two: especially in architecture. The remains of what was excellent in this art were at once applied to the purposes of the new faith, due care being, of course, taken to remodel and adapt it to the exigencies and ideas of Christian worship. As in former times the Greeks had availed themselves of the architectural elements they found in use among Egyptian and other nations, and according to their own ideas of beauty constructed a style eminently their own, in like manner the beautiful forms of Grecian artistic genius now served as a basis on which was raised a new and peculiarly Christian style. The date of such architectural composition is proved by St. Sophia's, Constantinople, built

in the time of Justinian by Anthemius,* who, in addition to being a great architect, was also well versed in the theory of his art and composed a treatise upon it. It has frequently been remarked that the habit of calling old-German mediæval architecture by the general name of Gothic, without the slightest distinction of epochs, is extremely inaccurate: yet it cannot be denied that the Goths left some memorials of their peculiar style of architecture in Italy during their occupation of that country. By means equally facile and direct, ancient music, especially its noblest and simplest kinds, was transferred to the purposes of Christian psalmody, which subsequently ascended from the organ in peals of exquisite melody. But sculpture and the pictorial arts must have sustained a greater check. Images of the gods regarded purely as such, and not as independent works of art, were naturally looked upon as objects of aversion by the early Christians. Representations of subjects and scenes, endeared to the associations of the Christian, may be supposed, for some time, to have been prized simply as memorials and reminiscences precious to his faith, without any view to artistic excellence. To poetic perfection the interruption must have been far greater. It is true that some few bards continued to treat mythology in a poetic manner. But these subjects having, by repeated attempts, been divested of their novelty, and the old mythology being extinct, nothing more could be expected in this department of the Muse, than tame imitations or feeble echoes of the older transcendent models. Attempts were made to create a Christian poetry and successfully so, in the lyric kind, songs, and hymns, which, being bursts of devotional feeling, found a type for their expression in the minstrelsy of Hebrew lays. Attempts on a larger scale, however, to commemorate Christianity were as unsuccessful as similar efforts made in later times;† since the form of it from the antique did not suit this purpose, and remained a lifeless abstraction,

* Trallianus Anthemius, celebrated in the departments of sculpture, architecture, and mechanics. Some of his fragmentary ideas on mechanics were published by Dupuy (1777) in French and Greek—*Transl. note.*

† Of this assertion Klopstock's "Messiade" is an obvious proof.—*Transl. note.*

wearing the metrical garb, but without the life or spirit of Poetry.

The poetic spirit of modern Europe was derived from its northern source of development. Whenever the Romans make mention of the Germanic races, they do not omit to allude to their fondness for poetry. We must for ever lament the loss of those songs in which the deeds of Hermann* were celebrated, as also of those prophetic strains, by means of which Velleda roused the Batavians to a final struggle for their liberties. Though the substance of German mythology could not possibly have enjoyed permanence on the introduction of Christianity; yet its poetic essence and creative energy were retained in historic epics. And when, in the lapse of time, these were softened by the diffusion of refinement, ennobled and embellished by the spirit of love and of devotion, chivalrous poetry started into being; this form was altogether peculiar to modern Christian Europe, and in its effects it materially influenced the national genius of the noblest races.

Of the Germanic nations that had embraced Christianity, the Goths were the first to produce these historical epics. They were chanted in the tent of Attila; they constituted a part of Theodoric's court-festivities: even the Latin writers of the age refer to them, and, in prosaic form, cite much of the poetic legendary history of bygone times that they have copied from them. The praises of the royal lineage of the Amali, and, in the sequel, of Attila, Theodoric, and Charlemagne, were celebrated in similar strains.

The Bible of Ulphilas, one of the extant memorials of the Gothic, exhibits a style extremely regular and cultivated for that period. It was a translation originally intended for the Goths dwelling on the shores of the Danube. Certain records inform us that the Goths used precisely the same idiom when in Italy; it is reported of Theodoric, that he encouraged education and literature equally in Gothic and

* Sometimes called Arminius, but whose name was probably Armin. The spot where this great soldier routed Quintilius Varus, the able Roman general, but who had made himself notorious for his shameful rapacity, cannot now be ascertained. Velleius, who served in this war, describes it it graphic colours. Horace addresses Epistle I. 15, to Numonius Vala who commanded one of the *alæ*.—*Transl. note.*

Latin. This, then, assumes a supply of educational and instructive works in Gothic, such as, subsequently, in Alfred's day, existed in the Saxon tongue. Judging from the manner in which Jornandes, the Latin historian, quotes Gothic epics, it might reasonably be argued that he, or at least the author from whom he copies, is not merely quoting from memory, but that they were actually in a written form, at the court of Theodoric. This may be presumed the more readily that the glories of the regal line of the Amali, and all the heroes descended from this stock, seem to have been the especial themes celebrated in these lays. Simultaneously with the extinction of the Goths, their language, too, disappeared, together with nearly all its memorials, which, according to some accounts, were long stored up in Spain; in that country the Goths maintained their power longest, and the haughty kings of Castille were wont to boast that Gothic blood flowed in their veins. On the other hand, there are contrary reports, to the effect that numerous memorials of the Gothic period were purposely destroyed in Italy, since they proved the Longobardic or Gothic descent of certain families who preferred tracing their genealogies to fictitious Roman descent, rather than to their own genuine nobility.

The German Bardic songs, which were collected and registered by Charlemagne's direction, considering the circumstances of the time, probably resembled the historic epics of the migration of nations in the Christian era. Heroic poems, of a much later date, are extant in German: they sing of Attila, Odoacer, Theodore, the line of the Amali, as well as other Frankish and Burgundian warriors who are mixed up with that time by legend or authentic history. Hence it may be inferred that, if not in form, in contents at least, extracts partly from Gothic epics, partly from those songs which Charlemagne had caused to be collected—as Solon did in the case of the Homeric lays—are yet embodied in the Nibelungen-lied.

Nobody adequately familiar with the spirit of that age could, for a moment, suppose that the songs thus collected by Charles were in praise of Hermann or Odin, or that they referred at all to the pagan mythology of ancient Germany. An additional proof may be adduced, that completely decides the question. The form of oath, yet extant, taken by the

Saxons on abjuring Paganism, ran thus:—"I renounce the Devil and all his works and words, Thunaer (*i.e.* the thunder-god or Thor), Wodan, and Saxon Odin, and all such sorcerers their familiars." This formula has been attributed to the eighth century, somewhat before the time of Charlemagne, but this is of no essential moment in regard to the habits of that period. Even in his reign, Odin was still worshipped in Saxony, and on the Hartz mountains prayers were offered up to him for success against the arms of Charlemagne. Under these circumstances, is it at all probable that Charles would have promoted or even sanctioned a collection of heathen lays dedicated to Hermann or Odin? The above oath determines yet other historical points, namely, the non-identity of Odin with Wodan, and the fact that Saxony was generally regarded as his father-land. The legendary traditions of Scandinavia, whilst they would fain appropriate him exclusively to themselves, admit that Odin was a Saxon king who came to Sweden, built Sigtund, and there established his dominion. The testimony of the Anglo-Saxons concurs with this allegation, whose Kings,—some, as Alfred, in unbroken lineage—descended from Odin. This Anglo-Saxon genealogy appears to be established on so historical a basis, and confirmed, in so remarkable a manner, by two distinct and independent branches of evidence that I am inclined to adopt the opinion of those who regard Odin as an historical personage of the third century. About this period the Romans, without sufficient resources for aggressive measures, and, as yet, unmenaced in this part of Germany, were, in a great degree, if not entirely, ignorant of occurrences in the northern interior of the country. This may serve to explain why Odin, whose glory eclipsed the lustre of every other name throughout Saxony and the North, was unknown to the Romans. Our mental estimate of Odin must, accordingly, be that of a victorious prince, a warrior-poet, whose soothsaying-songs effected many changes in the prevalent mythology, in which he was likewise assisted by seers, bards, and priests, selected for the purpose: in a word, of a soldier-poet, the prowess of whose sword was matched only by the fame of his magic arts, that eventually combined to procure for him the honours of deification. The tradition stating that Odin came from Asia to Saxony

is a Scandinavian myth, by no means suitable to the circumstances and relations of the historic Odin. With him, neither the wars of Pompey with the races of the Caucasus, nor the ruin and devastation communicated to the northern allies of Mithridates by his fall, can have any connection: inasmuch as the earliest notices of Germany in classical authors contain not a single trace referable to the historic Odin, or his new mythology. Scandinavian compilers were compelled to admit the existence of more than one Odin, and to endeavour to amalgamate the legends concerning the younger with those of the older, if they would, in some measure, reconcile their account with historical narrative. Of this older Odin I have only succeeded in discovering a single trace in ancient writers: it is, however, a remarkable one. Tacitus alludes to a tradition, according to which Ulysses, in the course of his travels, visited Germany, and there founded the city of Asciburgum. In matters like these, the ancients entertained views such as we can, with difficulty, comprehend. Their intention was to embody the general conception of a deity or hero. Thus, they were in the habit of styling the war-god of every nation, Mars; the deity presiding over science and art, Mercury, not paying much heed to local distinctions. Ulysses personified the common notion of a wandering hero: to him, or to his progeny, adventures and colonies in the far West continued to be ascribed. Wherever they met with legends among Western or Northern races respecting heroes that had immigrated from the East or South, they had prompt recourse to Hercules or Ulysses, either of whom they connected with the national story. The reminiscences of their origin and early emigration from Asia were not wholly extinct in the northern nations. Some such legend, then, referring to the visit of some hero from a distant land to Germany was, no doubt, rife in the time of Tacitus: the name, too, of this Odin was likely to suggest to the Romans the Greek appellation of Ulysses (Odysseus), and thus assist the coincidence. The import of the confused mass of accounts respecting the younger, and, doubtless, historic Odin, may be summed up in the following probable particulars:—his home had, originally, been among some of the Gothic tribes, whose habitations extended to the frontiers of Asia: he lived at a period,

when Christianity began to be diffused throughout a portion of the northern regions, with which, however, all were not equally satisfied, any more than with the emigrations that had set in, in the direction of Italy, and which must have had an effect on the national manners. At once a warlike prince, a minstrel, seer, and priest, Odin had resolved on reviving the mythology and mysteries of the north, and having, in pursuance of this design, founded a kingdom in old Saxony, had ended his heroic career in Sweden.

Historic legends and epics were, in all likelihood, not recorded in writing by the Gothic and Germanic races—until they were expressly directed to do so—being both contrary to the spirit of the lays and the usage of the minstrels; even long after the Germans had had continuous intercourse with the Romans, and could have experienced little difficulty in obtaining from them letters and the implements of writing. The case was different with those prophetic lays, which, in considerable numbers, were founded on the mythology of Odin. For the transmission of these there is not much doubt of the adoption of written characters. I have elsewhere taken an opportunity of expressing my opinion that the Germanic races were not wholly unacquainted with letters, even before they acquired their manifold uses from the Greeks and Romans. This has been denied; I will, therefore, proceed to state the grounds on which I have come to the conclusion that writing, though adopted in a very limited degree, was, nevertheless, not unknown to these nations. The Runic alphabet, as it has come down to us, is indeed a framework of later times; several letters are purely Roman. Yet others are altogether different, and cannot, by the most violent means, be deduced from that source. The peculiar arrangement and names of the letters, and the general incompleteness of the alphabet, which originally had only sixteen letters, are so many positive proofs of their being independent and underived. In the much more perfect alphabet subsequently received from the Greeks and Romans by the Goths and Anglo-Saxons, traces of the old Runic are still discernible. That this was common to most, if not all, of the Germanic races, is evinced by Runic inscriptions discovered in the remotest regions inhabited by Goths or other Germans. How then could these inscriptions have found

their way to Germany, and the North, except through the Greeks and Romans? But if there is a fixed resolve to account for them by some other channel, a not altogether improbable one is at hand. The Phœnicians, from whom so many other nations obtained their alphabet—modified according to the kind of speech and writing—monopolized the Baltic trade for a considerable period of time. It is a matter of history that many of the Germans inhabiting the shores of the Baltic were much more civilized than the warlike frontier-hordes of the Rhine. The Baltic strand witnessed the secret worship of Hertha,* described by Tacitus as a species of Mystery. Now it is extremely probable that Runic characters were especially adopted by similar priestly societies. It cannot be doubted that, from the earliest times, they were subservient to magic practices. Rods selected and consecrated for the purpose composed the words that accompanied the song of divination or incantation, the principal letters being repeated in regular form, and not without a certain significancy.† This custom can clearly be traced in the form of Runic inscriptions still extant. Imagine, then, the seer, or the priest, whilst the mysterious incantation is being chanted, laying these Runic rods before the Acolyte, who studied to solve the enigma by means of the magic staves, which we yet adopt as a grammatical term.‡ Accustomed as we are to the lucid precision of historical civilization, it is difficult to transport ourselves to the obscurity of the remote past: hence, those ages are commonly associated with much that is fanciful and erroneous, whilst the

* The goddess of the Earth in ancient German mythology, who made an annual solemn procession in her consecrated Wain, attended by priests. —*Transl. note.*

† The staves, previously marked, were thrown on a white cloth, according to the graphic account of Tacitus:—Germ. Cap. X. In Ulphilas, *Runa* means *secret;* hence the word *raunen* (to whisper), and *Alraune* (witch, sorceress). Of the magic uses of these *Runes* among the heathen Northmen, Rhabanus Maurus speaks in his book, "De invent. linguarum, ap. Goldasti Script. rer. Alleman. ed. Senckenberg. tom. II. p. 69. Litteras quippe, quibus utuntur Marcomanni quos nos Nordmannos vocamus, a quibus originem, qui Theodiscam loquuntur linguam, trahunt, cum quibus *carmina sua, incantationesque ac divinationes* significare procurant, qui adhuc paganis ritibus involvuntur."

‡ It will be remembered that the German word for *letters* is *Buchstaben* or book-staves.—*Transl. note*

truth of records, really attaching thereto, is doubted and denied.

When Saxony submitted to the yoke of Charlemagne, the mythology of Odin was extirpated. Many memorials and traces of its presence, however, survived until later times. The country people could not give up their Spring merry-makings; this innocent festival of nature, so delightful in all religions, was transferred to the beginning of May, a period at which Nature renews her loveliness under our northern skies: many similar customs were incorporated in our Christian Whitsuntide. Down to the present time, in some districts of North-Germany, large fires blaze at night on the mountain-tops, about the time when the days are longest: a relic of bygone ages, whose meaning, doubtless, significant to Paganism, as in so many other instances, has been irrecoverably lost. Hills and forests, the favourite haunts of heathen rites, in an especial manner long harboured an infinite variety of kindred reminiscences. For many Christian centuries, trees of immense size, and great age, or remarkable for any other distinguishing qualities, particularly oaks, were held sacred: no less so the ash, possessing magnetic properties, and declared in the Edda's legend of creation to be the origin of all nature. In later poetry, too, fragrant limes continued to be celebrated as enchanted trees, whilst, even now, the willow is connected with superstitions abounding in the same districts. As might have been expected, such memorials of the olden mythology as still lingered in the midst of the peasantry, after its general extirpation, assumed the form of mere superstition, degenerating more and more into deformity. The seers and witches of the past dwindled down into fortune-tellers, and instead of Odin's Walhalla, graced by heroes and gods, the unearthly din of the Walpurgis-night* disturbed the heated fancy of rustic clowns.

But though the mythology of Odin was rooted out in the

* Walpurgis was the sister of St. Wilibald, and born in England; died in 780, after having been Abbess in the convent of Heidenheim founded by her brother. She was canonized, and supposed to possess disenchanting powers. Fires are lit, in her honour, during the night of the 1/2 May. German Poetry abounds in allusions to practices associated with her memory.—*Transl. note.*

mother country, it yet remained in full force in the northern regions of Scandinavia, until, after a long and obstinate struggle, it yielded to the superior energies of Christianity; it has come down to us, fortunately, preserved in many noble songs and myths. Thus we are enabled to trace mediæval poetry and the features of the German mind, as a whole, to the original source which flows down to us in the Icelandic Edda. In its present form, the Edda dates from the interval between Harald Harfagr,—in whose time the Northmen (or Normans) effected a settlement in Iceland—and the death of Snorro Sturleson and the decline of Icelandic liberty: extending from 850—1250. In certain portions, frequent allusion is made to the Greek mythology, and even to Christianity, either with the view of assimilating, as far as possible, the leading features of the same with northern legends, or of connecting the latter with the history of ancient nations. Throughout the more important poetical portions of the older Edda breathes, indisputably, the genuine and pure spirit of the northern mythology, which is, more especially in its poetic aspect, distinguished from that of Greece by unity of plan and purpose. Hellenic mythology is, perhaps, too copious to be conveniently framed as one unique whole. Compared with the northern, it is deficient in a true end. The Grecian world of gods and heroes gradually merges into that of humanity; its poetry is lost in prose and reality. Northern mythology fittingly closes with a catastrophe to which all that precedes has a prophetic deference; and its essential features are comprehended in a single work, the Edda. The whole is, as it were, a consecutive poem, a continuous tragedy. It is a connected natural epic, detailing how, in the beginning, the world generally, and the earth in particular, proceeded from the remains of a giant; on the advent of happier times, Ysdragill, the sacred Ash, bloomed in vigorous life, where, of yore, the dread abyss had yawned. Then appeared the tree of life, casting its deep roots into the lowest depths, and, with its wide-spread branches, encompassing the universe. Heroes, and benevolent Genii, are in arms against enormous giants and the ancient powers of darkness, and in the end prevail; the ruin of the gods and the Asen, of Odin and his warriors, is at hand, all is one connected great poem on Nature and the

deeds of Heroes. The essence of the whole, as in most of the old legends, is the destruction of a glorious hero-world. In accordance with this idea, the noblest, bravest, and most handsome hero is generally the first to be cut off in the flower of his youth. While Odin assembles his trusty comrades in the halls of Walhalla, and animates them for the approaching final struggle, he is himself predestined to be defeated. The first event announcing general destruction is the death of Balder. To the hapless fate of the right-hearted Hector and the noble Achilles, which, in Trojan legend, is premonitory of the common downfall of heroism, Balder's death corresponds, in the prime of youthful manhood, the especial favourite of the gods. Unavailing is Odin's visit to the nether world, in search of his friend. Ehla, when questioned, replies only in enigmas, like the Theban Sphinx of old: and refuses to surrender her prey.

What approaches most nearly to truth is the description in the Northern Edda of the approaching obscurity and night of the gods with the overthrow of the good Asen and heroes of light—the irruption of darkness and its powers, which is to take place at the end of Time, and the terrible, though transient victory of the evil being, Loke—as well as of the new world of the gods, and the heavenly glory which will succeed that brief darkness. We are led to surmise that in all this there was something more than an unconscious deep-seated aspiration; that, in fact, it indicates an imperfect knowledge of the truths of Christianity.

At about the same period of Norwegian power, we may fix the date of Ossian's poems, at least so much of them as may be considered genuine. But since the sphere of their influence was entirely restricted to the Gaelic race in Scotland, without producing any effect on the rest of Europe, it will be more convenient to investigate their merits on a future occasion.

LECTURE VII.

TEUTONIC POETRY.—THE MIDDLE AGES.—ORIGIN OF MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES.—MEDIÆVAL POETRY.—LOVE-SONGS.—INFLUENCE OF NORMAN CHARACTER ON THE SPIRIT OF CHIVALROUS POETRY—MORE ESPECIALLY RELATING TO CHARLEMAGNE.

THE Germanic races of the rest of Europe, likewise, at this time, evinced a fondness for poetry, by various efforts to celebrate in verse particular portions of Holy Writ, and the principles of Christianity generally. In this, the Saxon conquerors of England, and Ottfried in southern Germany, took a prominent part. These efforts cannot, indeed, be considered as perfect triumphs of the Muse, nor were the achievements of later aspirants, in times of higher artistic development, much more successful. They are so many valuable memorials of the metrical diction of the age, especially since Christian bards did not invent a new measure for themselves, but adopted that of the old hero-songs. Of Ottfried this may be stated in the most definite terms, inasmuch as a solitary war-song has come down to us, composed in the self-same measure. It is a pæan, in honour of Ludwig, king of the East-Franks, triumphing over the Normans. An authenticated lay, written with such spirit, nine centuries ago, is an inestimable memorial. The historical value of its contents is not unimportant: as for instance, where it describes the awful silence of the troops, in battle array, awaiting the signal for onset:—

> Impatient stood the Franks,
> Their fiery zeal scarce checking:
> Panting to quit their ranks,
> Nor of their own lives recking.

A little further on are these lines:—

> Now the song was sung,
> And the battle begun.

Thus proving that the custom, prevalent among the ancient Germans, of rousing the martial ardour of the combatants,

by means of spirit-stirring melodies, was still usual. The opening lines of another poem, celebrating the praises of St. Anno, Bishop of Cologne, testify to the continued fondness for heroic lays throughout Christian Germany; they ran as follows:—

> Of warrior-deeds were often told,
> Of captured fort, of ruined town:
> How empires fell by Knights of old,
> How heroes part with angry frown.

The constant theme of epic poesy, namely, the downfall of national dynasties, and the contentions of heroes, is graphically sketched in this exordium.

Although the Nibelungen-lied did not, probably, assume its present appearance until the commencement of the thirteenth century, it is, yet, deserving of notice in this place, inasmuch as there is every likelihood that in its essential contents, perhaps of different proportions and idiom, it took its rise from some of the historical epics of the Goths, and was included in Charlemagne's collection.

The ingenious development of facts, and almost dramatic fulness of particulars, apparent throughout Homeric verse, were probably characteristic of Grecian genius, and all imitations of the same by other nations have resulted in utter failure. But among epics of a less ambitious character, and indeed in the chivalrous poesy generally of, comparatively, modern Europe, this patriotic poem stands unrivalled and alone. It is especially distinguished by strict unity of plan: being a picture, or rather a series of pictures, on a large scale, simple. The German language here exhibits a perfection and finish of which few vestiges remained in subsequent times. With great vigour and animation it united a tenderness that first degenerated into affectation, and then into intricacy and hardness. It has been already remarked that the heroic traditions of all lands have much that is essential and substantive in common, but it is the business of minstrel-genius to interweave this general matter with the main features of national history, and engraft it on the peculiar sentiments and poetic genius of a people. The tragic views and reminiscences of an extinct hero-world are once more expressed in the death of a favourite warrior, noble, handsome, and victorious, but doomed to relinquish

the matchless combination of so much glory prematurely, and in the bloom of youth: to which is attached a sad catastrophe drawn from semi-historical records and national annals. From this point of view, then, comparison with the Iliad naturally suggests itself: and if, in the German poem, the final catastrophe exceeds, in the depths of tragic pathos, any event mentioned in the Greek epic: on the other hand, the narrative, when depicting the death of the favourite hero, assumes a tenderness, a veil of exquisite delicacy, such as graces no similar scene in any other epic. Both sides of the picture of life, sunshine and shade, are sketched with a truthfulness equally happy: the beginning is as follows:—

"Von Freuden und Hochgezeiten, von Weinen und von Klagen
Von kühner Helden Streiten, mögt Ihr nun Wunder hören sagen."

"You may now hear the wondrous tale of rejoicing and marriage festivities, of weeping and lamentation, and of the conflicts of bold heroes."

But before proceeding further in investigating the characteristic features of this great German epic, let us, once more, take a comprehensive survey of mediæval times generally.

The middle ages are, sometimes, regarded as a chasm in the history of the human intellect, a void space, as it were between the genius of antiquity and the civilization of modern times. Art and science are, by an ingenious fiction, supposed to terminate their existence, only to start into life from chaotic nothingness after a sleep of ten centuries: this is inaccurate, nay untrue, in two respects. The essence of ancient knowledge and culture never entirely perished, whilst much that is noblest and most excellent in the improvements of modern times was born of mediæval genius. A question might be raised, whether ages most fertile in literary productions were on that account, the best and greatest in a moral, or the happiest in a political point of view. The experience we have of Roman grandeur, so decidedly antecedent to her literary development, ought to be applied by us as a test, when examining the history of modern Europe. But if this standard of the worth and moral dignity of nations, the only proper one, be not accepted, regard being had solely to intellectual culture and its visible products embodied in litera-

ture, still a different stand-point must be taken from that in vogue which forms so low an estimate of the mediæval period.

If literature be considered as the quintessence of the most distinguished and peculiar productions by which the spirit of an age and the character of a nation express themselves, in short, as the features in which the genius of an age, or the character of a nation is unmistakeably expressed: it must be admitted that an artistic and highly finished literature is undoubtedly, one of the greatest advantages any nation can possess. But if an equal degree of literary excellence is demanded of all countries—irrespective of general development or any other distinctions soever—and, in its absence, censure is pronounced in terms of indiscriminate obloquy, such a requirement can accord neither with justice nor the operation of natural laws. Everywhere, in particulars as in generals, in small things equally with great, inventive fulness is destined to precede the perfection of finished art, legend anticipates history, poetry is the forerunner of criticism. Given, a nation unendowed with poetic stores that date from some time prior to the period of regular artistic culture, and it may safely be asserted of the same, that it will never attain to any nationality of character, or vitality of genius. Poetic wealth like this, unaccompanied, however, by really great advances in literature or science, was possessed by the Greeks during the whole extent of time ranging from the Trojan adventures to the days of Solon and Pericles, and to this circumstance their intellect is chiefly indebted for its distinguishing excellence and brilliancy. In corresponding proportions, the middle ages served in lieu of such a poetic pre-existence to modern Europe; their creative fancy few will dare to question. The beautifully-silent process of growth necessarily precedes the appearance of the blossom, whilst the blossom, in its turn, reveals its graces before the matured charms of fruit are displayed. As in individuals, growth is the poetic bud of life, so in the career of nations there are moments of sudden development and intellectual expansion. With this universal spring-time of poetry, in the history of Western nations, the age of the Crusades, of chivalry, and love-songs may be fittingly compared.

In addition to its poetic side, principally connected with invention, pathos, and fancy, literature has yet another point of view. It may likewise be regarded as the organ of tradition, the medium of transmitting, not only the knowledge of past ages to coming generations, but also of preserving, and, in due course, of extending and projecting the acquisition. The poetic element of literature is the one that has become unfolded in the various dialects of modern Europe: the other, destined to the preservation of knowledge and science, is contained in Latin literature, which was common to all Western nations during the middle ages. In this respect, too, if the spirit of those ages be properly ascertained, the progress of events will be found to be unlike the conceptions of it that are commonly received.

For the sake of poetry, and the development of national genius, we might, indeed, wish, that Latin literature had not continued to be extant, or, at least, that this dead language had not been put to any use. By its means, history and philosophy were rendered inapplicable to the purposes of life. It is in itself a barbarism, and productive of most injurious consequences, when science and learning, legislative and political business, are conveyed through the medium of a foreign idiom no longer breathing the spirit of life. The results were still more fatal to the interests of poetry: numerous poetic memorials of the German and other nations of the West are hopelessly lost, in consequence of the well-meant intentions on the part of translators and commentators who metamorphosed spirited heroic legends and genuine verse, into fabulous, prosaic tales. On the other hand, much talent and many poetical productions have exerted no vital influence on nations and ages, because authors have wasted their powers in vain attempts to present vividly to others what was present to their own imaginations, through the medium of a dead language. In illustrating this remark, amid a host of examples it is only necessary to point to the Latin poem of Roswitha,* a nun who celebrated the praises of her great Saxon Emperor in a Latin poem, which had it

* *Hrosuita* or *Roswitha*, properly *Helena von Rossow*, born about 920. Her poem on Otto I. was entitled "Panegyris in Oddonem." Her collected works were first published in folio at Nuremburg in 1501. 2nd ed. by Schurtzfleisch at Wittemburg, 1707, 4to.

been written in German, would have been a valuable monument of the language, of living history and not less of poetic art. Petrarch, too, considered his Italian love-sonnets as mere idle conceits, the ebullitions of youthful feelings, and rested his fame and hopes of posthumous glory on a Latin poetical panegyric of Scipio, that has long since been engulphed in the waters of oblivion.* Both in Italy and Germany, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were rife with many genuine poets who chose to write in the Latin language, to the lasting injury of their fame.

But, whilst lamenting the injurious results that ensued from the universal adoption of Latin in the middle ages, it must be borne in mind that, under the circumstances of a half developed vernacular, in the several countries of the West, a common idiom was indispensable not only for ecclesiastical, educational, and scientific purposes, but likewise for transacting the ordinary business of government. This was the invaluable link, uniting the mediæval and modern world with the ancient. In all countries that adopted the Latin language, it was in an especial manner cultivated by the educated classes, as being the depository of all learning, in contradistinction to the degenerate, popular, or so-called *vulgar* tongue. Nor did this practice cease until the ninth or tenth century, when the plebeian dialect in these countries, the *Romance*, adapting itself to local genius, and the influence of circumstances generally, grew to be a separate and distinct idiom. The transition, however, was so gradual, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to fix the precise period when this great alteration was effected. So much the more natural was the delusion that induced people to regard Latin as a living language, long after it had positively fallen into desuetude. Hence the tradition of that tongue, together with its old pronunciation, remained in continuous force for ecclesiastical uses, and were adopted by learned societies, both of the clergy and laity; it was only gradually altered and never entirely disused.

The inheritance of the learning and ideas of ancient times may, justly, be regarded as the common property of collective humanity, entrusted to the custody of all ages and na-

* It remained unfinished.—*Transl. note.*

tions, under such sacred obligations, that we are entitled, in some measure, to hold the guardians of that awful trust responsible for its safe keeping. The feeling of disapprobation with which we contemplate any violence done to this bond which connects us with the world of our ancestors, and regards such an attempt as barbarism is a perfectly just and commendable feeling. Yet, care should be taken lest, in the heat of indignation, casual neglect, arising from circumstances over which human vigilance may have no control, or unforeseen accident, lead us to brand a whole age with the infamy of barbarism. There is no valid reason to charge any age with such a total interruption of that connection. Of wilful destruction, somewhat more frequent in the arts, few examples are afforded in literature. The only instance of intentional destruction that I can call to mind is in the case of certain Greek erotic poets, at Constantinople, in comparatively recent times, on the ground of alleged immorality and general licentiousness. In a purely literary point of view, this ethical and rigorous sensitiveness, so to speak, may, at first sight, appear culpable, and liable to the charge of overawing the pure spirit of poesy, and menacing the safety of memorials of the past. Yet, the number of Greek and Latin poetic productions, of an erotic cast, still extant, is a tolerable proof that mediæval compilers and copyists, Byzantine as well as Western, were not hypercritical in this respect. Unfortunate accidents, or the uncompromising exigencies of war have in former times occasioned the loss of many valuable remains of antiquity and of literature. This, too, has been the case in modern times, and since the invention of the art of printing. How much more frequently would this occur when instead of printed volumes there were only costly and rare manuscripts. In the palmiest days of Grecian and Roman refinement, long before the Goths sacked Rome, or the Arabs pillaged Alexandria, immense libraries became the prey of the flames in time of war, and hundreds and thousands of works thus, for ever, perished, since they no longer existed in a single manuscript. We deplore the loss of many valuable writers, and are on that account easily roused to indignation against the Middle Ages. It is obvious, however, that the loss of an individual author is an insufficient reason for preferring a charge of barbarism

against a whole generation. Of this we may be convinced by the well-known anecdote respecting the works of Aristotle, one of the most important relics of the Grecian mind, of which only a single manuscript was left by the ancients; this copy, forgotten and ill-preserved, was found and recovered by a mere accident. This happened in the midst of that time which we are wont to recognize as the acme of Greek and Roman literary splendour. Granted that historical criticism militates against the literal accuracy of the story, the result is the same: for what is here asserted of Aristotle, certainly happened in the case of many eminent writers, with less happy results, in the most flourishing period of antiquity. Due provision was made for the multiplication of copies in the West since Charlemagne's time, with at least as great care and pains as ever were bestowed in Alexandria and Rome. That a preference was shewn to Christian writings and writers, cannot be a just cause of censure. But how many Pagan and Roman writings were also preserved in the West? Constantinople was never sacked by the Goths, nor overrun with so-called Barbarians, up to the time of the Crusaders and the Turks. And yet, the whole amount of ancient Greek literature preserved to us by Byzantine efforts, is very much less than the proportion of Latin literary composition that has come down to us, though originally far less copious.

Classical education was, upon the whole, admirably adapted to the preservation of learning in the earlier portion of the middle ages. Only next in importance to the promotion of Christianity, was the attention paid to the study of Latin, as being the vehicle of scientific communication: then came the cultivation of the essentials of the mathematics, whilst the inmates of monasteries made it a matter of conscience and duty to assist, as far as possible, in multiplying the works of antiquity by transcription. As far as the purity of the language itself was concerned, a matter of no slight moment under those circumstances, Cicero and Quinctilian were the standards of imitation, standards scarcely to be equalled, certainly not surpassed, by any others of modern times. All competent judges admit that the written Latin of the eleventh century was superior to the written Latin of the Romans at the latter stages of their decline, as also to that of the sixth century.

Mathematical science was second only in the importance of its preservation to memorials of the languages: since it is the basis of natural philosophy, and of many technical crafts bearing directly on life. The rapid increase of social prosperity in general and of particular cities, especially in Germany under the Saxon Emperors, the flourishing condition of architecture, as well as of many other arts, consistent only with a highly scientific development, constitute evidence of the care that was taken to preserve the mathematical and mechanical knowledge bequeathed by antiquity.

The separation of the West from the cultivation of the Greek language and literature would seem to present scope for regret. Yet the separation was never at any time complete. From the time that Charlemagne applied himself to the study of Greek, in his riper years, and appointed teachers to disseminate that language in two cities of south Germany, to the period wherein the last two Othos of the Imperial house of Saxony, sufficiently acquainted with Greek to converse in it, the knowledge of this language was never lost in Germany. At first, as may be supposed, the language was exclusively studied in reference to the Bible and the Christian Fathers: but in 904, Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne, a descendant of the same royal lineage, sent to Greece for learned men, in order to familiarize himself, as well as others, with the profane historians and philosophers of that country. Under the dynasty of Saxon emperors, closely connected with the Byzantine court by marriage, a number of fine churches and other architectural memorials were erected, especially in northern Germany, in imitation of St. Sophia's, the early model of Christian architecture. Taken altogether, Germany was, during this period, from the tenth to the twelfth century, at once the most powerful and highly civilized country in all Europe.

We have seen, then, that the charge of barbarizing Rome and the West, generally, which has sometimes been brought against the Germanic races, is utterly destitute of foundation. The accusation is one of aggravated injustice, when preferred against the Goths during the early period of the migration of nations. Long before their victorious appearance in Italy, they had embraced the doctrines of Chris-

tianity, and had acquiesced in the existing relations of the learned and religious orders of society; they cannot, therefore, on the whole, be said to have demolished, but rather upheld the institutions of science, as far as was compatible with existing circumstances. Only a single exception to this statement occurs to me: when the Goths were led by a savage, pagan conqueror, not of their own nation, or when the demon of faction prompted them to wreak their vengeance, for they were Arians, on the devoted heads of Catholics. The last bloom of really ancient Roman literature took place under Theodoric, and never did the pretended patriotism of Italy take so preposterous a turn as when her later bards took for their favourite theme:—the emancipation of Italy from the Gothic yoke. Under this very Gothic yoke, in Theodoric's time, the dawn of better times for Italy appeared, which was only too soon overcast. Real misery and real barbarism set in, when the Goths were expelled, and the oppressions of Byzantine eunuchs and satraps began. A more complete justification of the influences exercised by Germanic races on modern Europe cannot well be formed than in a comparison of the active aspirations, the glorious national energies of the European West, the poetry of the middle ages, with the slowly wasting powers of the Byzantine empire, the political dry-rot of a thousand years. And yet, the Byzantines were in possession of literary treasures and means of information infinitely greater than the Western nations, who were compelled to resort to them for instruction in many branches of learning. But even in literature and the domains of mind, real power does not so much depend on the inheritance of vast accumulations, as on the living, practical use made of them.

Of a more unfavourable character were the conquests of those Germanic races that were not yet Christianized, of rude manners, and thoroughly unacquainted with Roman regulations and institutions of science, such as the Franks in Gaul, or the Saxons in Britain. If an interval of destruction and darkness must needs be assumed, we must place it most correctly in the period between Theodoric and Charlemagne, and even then it was not entire. For whilst Italy groaned under the pressure of Byzantine despotism, the light of

intelligence and active industry took refuge in the far north, in the cloisters of Ireland and Scotland. Scarcely had the Saxons in England taken possession of their Christian inheritance, together with the scientific culture of the period, when they speedily outstripped the nations of the West, and the glorious light of Truth was transplanted to France and Germany, never again to be extinguished. Since Charlemagne's time, a steady, methodical, and indefatigable diffusion of knowledge continued to increase, so that the actual epoch of the revival of learning, dating, according to some historians, from the Crusades, ought, in reality, to commence with the reign of that great monarch. In the time of the greatest obscurity, from the sixth to the eighth century, those institutions of learning, that received such powerful support at the hands of Charles, were gradually extending the sphere of their operations: I allude to the conventual system.* To these ecclesiastical corporations, by whose means the soil was rendered productive, the people civilized, the state established on a sure basis, and learning disseminated, modern Europe owes her subsequent ascendancy over the Byzantines and Arabs, though the former were vastly her superiors in point of inherited, preliminary knowledge, and the latter in external means and resources. If comparison be instituted between the poetical indigence of Alfred, or the frugal economy of victorious Charles, in connection with the limited appliances of both in their literary enterprises—and the prodigality of wealth and splendour at the command of Harun al Raschid, or other Caliphs and Sultans, in their capacity of absolute sovereigns of the fairest oriental lands—for the extension of learning, the West seems dim and lustreless. Nevertheless, the triumphs of the West were brilliant and complete: clearly demonstrating that learning is better calculated to derive sustenance and vigour from free institutions and the steady growth of ages, than when dependent upon precarious patronage, such as the capricious smiles of interested despots. Charlemagne chiefly contributed to

* The general spirit of Schlegel's remarks on the merits of the conventual system, will hardly meet with sympathetic response from Mr. Froude, (Hist. of England, from the fall of Wolsey to the death of Elizabeth), or Mr. Buckle (History of Civilization in England).—*Transl. ote.*

the civilization of posterity by non-intervention in the temporal affairs of the learned corporations of his time, confining himself to securing their liberties, and providing for the independent exercise of their functions. How important soever the exertions of Charles for the improvement of Latin literature, as well as of the vernacular, it is indisputable that Alfred, himself an enquiring scholar, and, for his time, a man of erudition, rendered still greater services to literature, especially in the improvement of his own tongue. But England sustained considerable injuries from the frequent incursions of the Danes, whilst many of the institutions for the promotion of learning, founded by Charlemagne in France and south Germany, were plundered and ravaged by Normans in the one, and Hungarians in the other. Civilization blossomed anew under Saxon Emperors, and displayed a development of form more excellent than in the time of Charles and Alfred. Germany was, at that period, especially fertile in trustworthy historians, more so than any other European country; reckoning from Eginhard, the private secretary of Charles, to Otto von Freisingen, a prince of the House of Babenberg, son of St. Leopold, and uncle of the great Barbarossa, of the imperial family of Hohenstaufen: this was perhaps owing in part to the fact that Germany was the great centre of political action. Latin mediæval histories generally went by the contemptuous appellation of monkish chronicles, composed as they were by the clergy of the time. In adopting this opprobrious term people seem to ignore the fact that the historians thus libelled were for the most part of high birth, conversant with state-secrets, and generally speaking the best educated and well informed men of their day. From the abundant opportunities occurring in the course of their travels, they were competent to afford information, both interesting and instructive, respecting the social arrangements of the remote East, or the still less familiar north, testimony the more valuable that it proceeded from eye-witnesses. Thus, in depreciating the middle ages, it was customary to string together the most contradictory objections. If clerical degeneracy were the subject of complaint, it was asserted that the clergy administered extensive rule, fared as sumptuously as princes, and directed the helm of the state. But if their works

were criticised, it was alleged that they were ignorant monks, unacquainted with the world, and manifestly unfit to write history. In truth, the position of those authors was the very beau-ideal of literary condition most calculated to combine the elements of success. For, whilst they had ample opportunities of knowing the realities of life, by mingling in its scenes, they had also the requisite independence and leisure for the privacy and dispassionate judgment of the closet. Such was, precisely, the situation of many historians in the time of the Saxon emperors, the value of whose labours the progress of historical research has, of late times, greatly enhanced. In the department of philosophical enquiry England and France had very distinguished writers, even before the exercise of Arabian influence and their exclusive introduction of the Aristotelian system. In the ninth century shone Scotus Erigena, a name given to a certain philosopher of Scotland, or, according to some, of Ireland: no less profound was the erudition of Anselmus, though he did not care to extend the boundaries of truth beyond their existing limits; Abelard was distinguished for his vivacity of thought as well as speech, likewise for his classical attainments, as also his pupil John of Salisbury.

It will easily be understood that an interval of chaotic confusion necessarily ensued in those countries adopting the Roman idiom, before the vernacular could, in every case, entirely disengage itself from the Latin, and be moulded into distinctive features. But for the intervention of adverse circumstances, the relations of the Germanic races would have been much more favourable to civilization, in this particular. For it is, incomparably, a matter of greater facility to develop, in parallel degrees, two languages entirely differing from each other, than it is to remodel two dialects in some measure interwoven and united. To effect the latter is ever a work of time. The loss of primitive dialects, on whose culture some pains had been bestowed, was of course unfavourable to the progressive advance of German literature. The Gothic tongue, after having attained to a certain regularity of form and expression, shared the fate of the Goths themselves. The Anglo-Saxon had arrived at a still higher degree of perfection, and, in Alfred's time, may be said to have embodied a complete digest of literature; namely, a

collection of poems and translations, as also of prose histories and works of science. Yet this language perished, with the exception of some few memorials, on the conquest of England by the Normans, and from the mixture of their own, the French tongue, with other idioms, resulted the English of the present day. German had thus, a third time, to recommence the difficult task of reconstruction. This, accordingly, took place in the ninth century, when our present High-German developed itself, a dialect of the Alemanni, consisting of a fusion of Gothic and Saxon, with intermixture of Latin: there had been earlier attempts to effect this object, but without definite result. In the memorials of the Alemanni we observe the German language in that ill-assorted, unwieldy condition, and chaotic confusion, characteristic of tongues that after a severe internal struggle, have not yet arrived at consistency and proportion. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the collective Romance dialects underwent a process precisely similar. Before all other tongues German is wont to be considered of pure and original stock. Encomiums of this nature may, indeed, apply to Old Saxon, in all respects, but is not, by any means, true of our present High-German, which is of more recent date, and being one of those languages formed by blending Latin with old-German, is entitled to consideration, as enshrining the genius and civilization of the most refined European countries. Old-Saxon, which attained to its greatest perfection, in England, during the reign of Alfred, was the genuine primitive stock of all German idioms, and common to the several cognate branches of that people. It is an indisputable fact that the Saxons of north Germany spoke the same dialect as those of England; the Franks likewise originally used it, since it was common to the whole of the Germanic north. The Romans could employ the services of a Frank interpreter in England, the Saxon Briton needed none in Sweden, and when Alfred entered the Danish camp in minstrel's disguise, he sang no foreign lays, but had merely to modify his pronunciation slightly. But, it will be asked, in which of the varied German idioms were those poetic legends composed that Charlemagne had given directions to collect? Certainly not in Gothic, for that idiom was extinct, save where some spare remnants of its name still

lingered amid the Spanish Asturias. Neither in the upper-German of the Alemanni, a dialect which did not come into existence until some time after the decease of Charles, and which is styled Frank simply because, in the Carlovingian period, that term was applied to all German idioms without distinction. Nor should it be forgotten that even in his time, these songs or legends were from one to two centuries old. It may, I believe, be asserted with some degree of confidence, that they were translated from Gothic into Saxon, the Saxon that Alfred wrote, and that Charles spoke, when not using the Romance: for he preferred living in the Rhenish Netherlands, the old home of the Franks, whose idiom, likewise, was originally Saxon.

This observation, being no less important in reference to history than to philosophy and poetry, I have thought deserving of passing notice.

The origin of High-German may be accounted for in the following manner. German races, the primordial inhabitants of the Baltic coasts, of necessity changed their speech on migrating further south: the Goths, for instance, who settled on the shores of the Black Sea, and there founded a mighty empire, from constant intercourse with nations of heterogeneous mixture, naturally caught some of their expressions, and, in process of time, created a new idiom for themselves. In south Germany, more especially in alpine districts, the usual influence of climate obtained, a rough pronunciation and guttural accents characterizing that hilly region. Gothic and Frank rule, following in close succession in south Germany, produced a fusion of several German dialects, whilst the admixture of Romance is attributable partly to the settlement of Roman colonies on the banks of the Danube, and partly to the early introduction of Christianity into the district; to the self-same cause, the presence of the Romance on the north-west frontier of the Rhine is clearly to be traced, yet here the north-German Saxon stock is, as a whole, comparatively pure and unmixed. These were the influencing circumstances that changed the regular and beautiful Gothic tongue into the rough vulgar dialect of the Alemanni: which, after having been cultivated and polished for centuries, assimilated more and more to the Saxon idiom, on the union of northern and southern Germany under one

Emperor, and thus, in process of time, formed itself into high German. In the so-called Swabian period of Hohenstaufen rule, it attained to a full and regular conformation, but soon after relapsed into pristine rudeness, on the social and political decline of the empire.

Of all Romance tongues, the Provençal was the first to develop itself, probably because it contained the smallest amount of foreign admixture. The country having early become subject to the Romans, the indigenous idiom soon became extinct: the German colony being proportionately small and unimportant. To conclude our survey of the languages of modern Europe with one or two general remarks, it may be stated, that of all idioms originating in an intermixture of Latin with German, that of upper Germany or the Alemanni, and the Provençal were the first to attain to any regular development, and they retained the greater purity that they were the least alloyed. Of three that were subject to more heterogeneous admixture than some others, Italian, Spanish, and north French, this latter, which differs *most* from Latin, did not attain its highest point of perfection until *after* the two former. The English tongue is the youngest of all in point of time, and contains nearly equal parts of Latin and German constituents. Here, too, the chaotic condition necessarily resulting from such a mixture endured longest. Yet, the intrinsic beauty, the sound vigour, the facile pliancy of that language, together with the national spirit of its literature, prove that happy results are by no means inconsistent with such elements of origin.

The general regeneration of life and sentiment, in the age of the Crusades, was particularly manifest in the progress of that kind of poetry called, in the Provençal, *le Gay-Savoir*, which produced such a host of lays of chivalry and love among the most genial European nations of that day. Since the accents of love breathe throughout all the chivalrous poesy of the period, thus constituting a marked feature which serves to distinguish it from other purely heroic songs, I will, first, proceed to examine the love-poetry. The *Minnegesang* originated with the Provençals, and was then adopted by the Italians, who are supposed to have, at first, composed the poetry exclusively in that dialect. The Provençal is now, as it were defunct, and hence such memorials

of it as still survive in collections of manuscripts are not turned to any account.*

Next to France, in point of time, the *Gay-Savoir* bloomed in Germany, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This species of song did not reach its full maturity in Italy until the time of Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, who bestowed upon it an artistic finish, whilst in Spain it bloomed a century later. Indeed, the last great poet who attained to any degree of celebrity therein lived far into the sixteenth century: this was Castillejo, who accompanied Ferdinand the First to Austria.

In each of the above nations, the *Minnegesang* assumed distinctive and peculiar features, in accordance with the national genius; neither is there any reason to suppose that, with the exception of Italy, any one nation borrowed largely from the rest; whilst chivalrous poesy ever and anon was transplanted from one region to another, and became in some degree, a species of public property. The very form of the *Minnegesang* differed in various countries. Rhyme is common to them all, but rhyme musical, and almost prodigal in sportive fulness. This quality, in which they all participated, is probably owing to the character of the music of that time, since they were originally intended to be sung.

It has been asserted, on slender foundations, that the German *Minnesingers* derived their inspiration from the Provençal; this is the less probable, seeing that there were love-songs at a date considerably earlier. So far back as the reign of Lewis the Pious, it was found necessary to interdict the nuns the too frequent use of these German love-songs or *Wynelieder*. Some of the German princes, it is true, more accustomed to Italy than to their own country, composed poetry in the Provençal dialect: yet this fact neither affirms nor denies any thing in reference to the German *Minnegesang*. Had their verse been copied, the German minstrels would scarcely have failed to make some mention of their models, as Petrarch often does with such

* For further information relative to this, the elder, but least known branch of the Romance family of languages, the reader is referred to A. W. von Schlegel's work "Sur la langue Provençale."

feeling and beauty, and as the German compilers of narrative chivalrous poesy almost invariably cite their Provençal or French sources.

However this may be, the German love-songs are thoroughly distinct, both in point of character, metrical form, and sentiment, from the Provençal and the French: the German being the most copious of all collections of this species of song now extant.

The gentle spirit that animates them is a point which most readily strikes the reader; and we start with wonder on beholding the names of knights who figure therein as heroes, emblazoned on the scroll of martial heraldry. Yet, this antithesis is any thing but rare in nature, and should not be alien to the heart that throbs with noble pulsations; for in the midst of warlike preparation, the tenderest emotions will sometimes be excited.* And thus the old melody, attributed to king Richard, is a soft plaintive ditty, scarcely to be expected from the lion-hearted hero.

But whilst it has never been denied that the German love-songs are characterized by tender feeling, by graceful and harmonious diction, they have been charged with uniformity and puerilities. The first of these two objections is somewhat singular; it is as though one complained of a superabundance of flowers in a garden, or in spring-time. Undoubtedly, poems of this sort ought to scent the path of life, in separate clusters, here are there, without nauseating superfluity. Laura herself might have heen surfeited, had she read, at one sitting, all the stanzas in which Petrarch immortalized her beauty and his own passion. We now see, in a collec, tive poem, the varied charms of a hundred poetic garlands-which lose half their attractions, by being so primly festooned. Though the songs are not all actually addressed to some fair charmer, but to some imaginary object, yet they were intended to be sung, and thus to enliven and embellish

* Scott beautifully expresses the same idea, when he says (Lay of the Last Minstrel, canto iii.):—

"In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed!
In war he mounts the warrior's steed;
In halls, in gay attire is seen;
In hamlets, dances on the green.
Love rules the camp, the court, the grove," etc.—*Transl note.*

social life. Moreover, it is a necessary element of love-songs, as, indeed, of lyric composition generally, if it be the outpouring of fresh natural feeling really emanating from the heart, to move only within a limited sphere of feeling and thought. This is confirmed by examples drawn even from the serious lyrics of every nation. Feeling must preponderate over thought, and have, as it were, a commanding aim, if it is to be suitably expressed in melody; and where feeling predominates, richness of thought must hold a subordinate place. Variety of lyric verse is commonly met with in ages of imitation, when all conceivable subjects are treated in every possible variety of form; the tone and taste of nations, most distinct and peculiar in their genius, are blended together without any reference to harmonious accord; the original nature of the verse having degenerated into smart epigrams or elegant bagatelles.

The other objection that has been advanced, that of puerility, is not altogether unfounded; yet, I know not if it may, really, be considered as such. The ancients, though representing the fiery glow of passion in their erotic poems, still recognized the sportive elements of Love, inasmuch as their mythology depicted Amor in the guise of a child, with whose puerile appearance many fanciful conceits and images were connected. This animated character of chivalrous times is suggestive of the many violent results to which the passion led. The page of history teems with illustrations of their frequency. In the *Minne-lieder* the serious passionate features of Love are not brought out in such strong relief. Not that they are as utterly exempt from sensuousness as the Platonic epigrams and sonnets of Petrarch. Yet the details of the passion are but lightly touched. With almost exclusive preference the Minne-singer treated of that kind of feeling which most readily admits of free scope for the play of imagination. The spirit of those songs, especially the German, may be thus described. Respect for the sex, one of the peculiar qualities of the Germans, in the rudest times, grew still more refined as civilization progressed; when Christianity progressively purified all notions of morality and delicacy, this respect attained to a sublime tenderness, ennobling and beautiful, even for the purposes of poetry. The Provençal love-courts, and tribunals in which

verdicts were pronounced on disputed cases, with almost metaphysical subtlety, are altogether foreign to the spirit of the German love-songs. These latter are artless when contrasted with the ingenious conceits of Petrarch, or the rejoinders of Spanish lays; yet more instinct with feeling than either, and celebrating not only the transports of affection, but, likewise, revelling in the charms of nature and the delights of spring.

Epics are altogether the poetry of the past; the bard who in an age of refinement, dares attune his lyre to genuine epic minstrelsy, surveying antiquity from some eminence of art, is rarely to be met with in the history of advanced civilization, and must needs possess a mind endowed with a combination of the highest natural endowments; his presence is to be hailed as a rare phenomenon. Dramatic art, on the contrary, can never reach any great elevation or excellence except in polished times. Youth, whether of individuals or of nations, is the fitting season for lyrical excellence. But the period of the Crusades was eminently the rejuvenescence of activity and warlike ardour, as it was of fresh vigorous feeling, among the nations of the West.

Next to the Crusades, the Normans, perhaps, contributed most to give a fresh impulse to European fancy. The principles of chivalry, it is true, were already sown broad-cast, forming, as they did, a considerable portion of the old German social system; poetical belief in the marvellous, in heroes of gigantic strength, mountain-sprites, mermaids, fairies, and weird dwarfs, remained as relics of the old northern mythology. But the Normans vivified all those chivalrous and poetic elements, with inspirations drawn directly from the living source. Neither did this spirit desert them when their sentiments became Christian, and their language French; it was disseminated throughout the whole of France and Christian Europe; it followed the Normans into England and Sicily, and accompanied them on their dauntless expeditions to Jerusalem, in which they took so distinguished a part. Not their sentiments only, but their mode of life too, was extremely poetic; it nurtured their inclination for adventure, in every enterprise it prompted them to choose the most daring and perilous post; in a word, by continuously directing their attention to the marvellous,

it enabled them to exercise great influence on the poetry of the middle ages. The history of Charlemagne seems to have been an especial favourite with them. The reliable portion of this history would appear rather unfavourable to the laurels of that emperor; as, for instance, the battle of Roncesvalles, in which the French army, having been surprised by the Arabs and Spaniards, sustained a total defeat, and Roland died heroically on the field. That reminiscences of this disaster were still cherished in the memory of the people, and early became poetic themes, can only be accounted for in this way; that, despite so unhappy a reverse, the arms of Charles had, on the whole, presented a check to Arab incursions, and, beyond the Pyrenees, had established a common bulwark for protecting the liberties of the entire West. There were additional points that lent a more than passing interest to this occurrence. Those knights had fallen whilst vindicating Christianity against her mortal foes; though they had not been victorious here below, they had won for themselves a crown of heavenly imperishable laurels. Their names were henceforth recorded in the glorious muster-roll of martyrs. With this view, unquestionably, the lay in honour of Roland was composed, the Norman war-song: viewed apart from this consideration, it is difficult to see why a plaintive strain should have been selected to arouse the martial energies of a warrior host. In the time of the Crusades, the history of Charles' exploits, of the battle of Roncesvalles, and of Roland's death, was celebrated as a crusade; with the attention, at first, of holding it up as a pattern for the imitation of crusaders and knights; indeed, a fabulous crusade was long attributed to Charlemagne. Traditions of sultans and the magic arts of the East were, by degrees, incorporated in this history, as also comic personages and ludicrous fictions of every kind. The crusaders, on their return, disseminated many fabulous legends, and about this time the account of the wonderful travels of Marco Polo —commonly called Messer Millione from his exaggerating tendencies—got into general circulation. Soon, there was nothing prodigious or monstrous, partially founded on fact or wholly fabricated, from Morocco to China, that was unrecorded in this comprehensive poem. Thus, the authentic narrative of the wars of Charles, essentially calculated to

form the subject-matter of an epic, was in process of time shifted from its rightful ground, and made the vehicle of unbridled imagination. It assumes this form in Ariosto, and some others who preceded or followed him; when the poet, sure of the magic of his diction and imagery, himself breaks through the illusion of his verse, by means of studied excess, gratuitous disorder, and the winged conceptions of his wit.

LECTURE VIII.

THIRD SET OF CHIVALROUS POEMS.—ARTHUR AND THE ROUND TABLE.—INFLUENCE OF THE CRUSADES AND OF THE EAST ON THE POESY OF THE WEST.—ARABIC SONG.—THE PERSIAN EPIC OF FERDUSI.—LAST COMPILATION OF THE NIBELUNGEN-LIED.—WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH.—REAL IMPORT OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE.—LATER CHIVALROUS POETRY.—THE CID.

THE subjects celebrated in mediæval chivalrous poetry are especially selected from three different groups of fabulous history. To the first of these belong such legends as are immediately connected with Gothic, Frankish, and Burgundian warriors of the period of national migration. It is of their praises that the Nibelungen-lied treats, as also the so-called *hero-book*, which is a collection of fragmentary pieces. These heroic legends have, for the most part, some historical foundation: they breathe the northern spirit, they constituted fruitful themes for Scandinavian minstrelsy, and are eminently suggestive of paganism and the old German mythology. Charlemagne formed the second great topic of chivalrous poesy; especially his wars with the Arabs, the battle of Roncesvalles, and the famous exploits of his assembled chiefs. Narrative of this sort was not long in deviating from the track of genuine history: the activity of the hero was soon changed into the supine indolence of an oriental despot. This view may have been somewhat influenced by the circumstance that the Normans, the chief cultivators of

this species of poetry, were accustomed to regard Charles, in the midst of all his renown, as similarly situated to the apathetic monarchs of France in their own time. But, whatever the cause may have been, the fact remains, that descriptions of this prince gradually gained so great an accession of comic humour as completely to overshadow the element of reality they contained, until they eventually degenerated into mere play of fancy, as is seen in Ariosto. This was not entirely the case with the third series of chivalrous poesy, including the story of British Arthur and his Round Table. Here, too, the purely historical portion of the narrative was enriched with strange and marvellous additions afforded by the Crusades, and even farthest India was brought within the sphere of poetic representation. The Arthur of history—a Christian king, of Celtic origin, in Britain—and his contests with the early pagan leaders of the Saxons, would have constituted too meagre a theme for descriptive song, without extraneous assistance. Destined as it was to represent the ideal of perfect chivalry, this poem was embellished with all the imagery of gorgeous imagination. With it were connected descriptions of the relations of love to chivalrous adventure. The most distinguished lay of this set partakes of the elegiac character, as may be gathered from its very name of Tristram. This plaintive elegiac tinge is exceedingly becoming to representations of this nature: both because of the striking antithesis obtaining between external life and the inward consciousness of the transitory evanescent charms of youth, which, in most cases, leaves an impress of melancholy: as also of the impossibility of completely satisfying the aspirations of loftier humanity. The poetic atmosphere of knightly manners and deeds, with which the destiny of love is here associated, is throughout beautifying and ennobling. The representations of modern times, depicted in the stern reality of the present moment, resort in vain to psychological refinements and to a knowledge of life and manners to make up for the defect of poetic power. The world and its inhabitants cannot be known from books. It is, indeed, the province of poetry to arouse in the yet untutored bosom a presentiment of feelings, which are already a natural poetry, and to re-awaken those sensations in hearts which have before experienced

them: whilst it is her proud prerogative by a magical power, not to ennoble these feelings, but to preserve them in their natural element of Beauty. Of the longer chivalrous love-epics of the middle ages, Tristram is held in the highest repute by all nations: whilst, in order to guard against the risk of monotony, Launcelot, a personification of genial humour, was added as a companion to the more pensive lay.

There was yet another purpose to which the story of Arthur and the Round Table was made subservient. It was not only intended to express the essence of knightly virtue, but also to embody the conception of a spiritual knighthood that, true to solemn vows and unscathed in the midst of a severe ordeal, had surmounted the successive steps of the ladder of perfection. This did not, however, prevent poetry from unfolding her rich profusion of matchless charms in depicting varied dangers by flood and field, of War and of Love, both in the East and the West. The name of St. Graal designates an entire series of chivalrous poems allegorically devised, of which the proposed aim is to point out the method by means of which the hero is to render himself more worthy of the secrets and relics to be entrusted to his keeping. But certain indications would lead us to infer that these poems were not destined merely to represent the ideal of spiritual knighthood, as it flourished in that age of foremost orders: but was likewise meant to express some of the symbolical conceptions and traditions entertained by a few of these orders, especially the Templars. This point is, to some extent, fraught with historical significancy. Lessing was the first to take notice of this circumstance, as far as I am aware: and his opinion, owing to the extent of his researches, is entitled to our respectful consideration. Competent judges of these matters, on an attentive perusal of the older poems, will undoubtedly coincide with his views. The French Romaunts of St. Graal bear unmistakeable traces of the fact, and their presence is, if possible, still more incontestable in the artistic German compilation.

We have seen, then, that Arthur and the Round Table, constituting the third series of fabulous chivalric poesy, bears a peculiarly allegorical character. These three, namely the Nibelungen, the exploits of Charlemagne, and the ad-

ventures of the Round Table, formed the leading subjects of mediæval poesy: around these numerous other fictions gathered as around a common centre. It now remains for us to consider the varied manifestations of the genius of chivalrous poetry, as indeed of chivalry itself, that obtained in the principal countries of Europe; also its duration, and the several modes in which this poetry became extinct, having in no instance attained to the full maturity of vigour and artistic excellence of which it was unquestionably susceptible. However, it will first be necessary to give a short sketch of the influence of the Crusades on the poetry of the West, and also to allude to the connexion which the Eastern muse had with that event.

One of the especial effects of the Crusades, was to arouse the imagination on contemplating so stupendous an undertaking. The achievements of Godfrey of Bouillon were celebrated in the self-same age in which he lived: they needed not the mystery of antiquity to render them poetical. And yet minstrels were found who preferred the fabulous tales respecting Charlemagne, and those of the Round Table, chiefly because they afforded a wider scope to the imaginative faculty.

The influence that oriental poetry exercised on Europe by means of the Crusades, fall short of what is usually supposed: so much of it as is real belongs, for the most part, though not exclusively, to the Persians and not the Arabs. Of the several poetical works of the East claiming our notice, there are two which chiefly serve to express this influence, and mark the spirit that was thus transmitted to Europe, or was originally akin to the genius of the north. These are the popular collection of Arabic tales, known as the "Thousand and one nights," with which we are all familiar: and the Persian epics of Ferdusi, who has been called at one time the Homer, and at another the Ariosto, of the East.

The older poetry of the Arabs, before Mahomet, consisted, so far as we know, of lyric hero-songs, in which, without any reference to mythology, martial achievements and feelings of love were celebrated with the glories of some hero and his race. All that tended to exalt a favourite clan, or to depreciate its rivals, was fearlessly and unreservedly stated.

Here and there, praises are interspersed with moral maxims and ingenious conceits, such as are congenial to oriental tastes. Mythology proper, or a digest of fictions relating to supernatural beings engaged in contest with each other, similar to the creations of the Greeks, the Persians, and the nations of the north, are nowhere found in early Arabic poetry. It is of so local a character as scarcely to admit of being transplanted; indeed, a certain degree of acquaintance with Arab life is absolutely necessary if we desire to appreciate, or even thoroughly understand their poetry. The absence of a peculiar mythology, and the restricted purpose of the song to celebrate the praises of some Arab clan, suggest a comparison with the strains of Ossian.* Only, that in the latter, a pensive elegiac tone is chiefly conspicuous: in unison with the feelings incident to a declining race, or the inhabitants of a region enveloped in mist, belted with the angry waves of the north sea, under the canopy of a murky sky. Whilst in the Arab verse, a proud, animated, and daring spirit prevails, the utterance, as it were, of a conquering people, and suited to the temper of a southern clime. Warlike and defiant sentiments, expressed in the tone of conscious triumph, are throughout apparent. Minstrelsy like this is of necessity, purely local, and flourishes only on its native soil. On the other hand, the strains of mythological heroic legend easily pass from one nation to another, and everywhere exhibit traits of close affinity.

Mythological poetry was essentially foreign to the early genius of the Arabs. It is related of one of the contemporaries of Mahomet that he introduced the Persian legends of Isfendiar and some other adventurous knights into Mecca, as a striking novelty, but was soon rebuked by his popular

* "Fingal," is come out.....a brave collection of similes, and will serve all the boys at Eton and Westminster for these twenty years. I will trust you with a secret, but you must not disclose it; I should be ruined with my Scotch friends; I cannot believe it *genuine;* I cannot believe a regular poem of six books has been preserved, uncorrupted, by oral tradition, from times before Christianity was introduced into the island. What! preserved unadulterated by savages dispersed among mountains, and so often driven from their dens, so wasted by wars civil and foreign! Has one man ever got all by heart? I doubt it; were parts preserved by some, other parts by others. Mighty lucky....."—Horace Walpole's Lett. (clxi.)—*Transl. note.*

chief, who feared that their popularity would injure his own poetry and his own projects.

This eager fondness for the exuberant fancy of Persian poetry was abundantly evinced by the Arabs when they held dominion over Asia. The "Thousand and one nights," already referred to, giving obvious proof of this. The critics of oriental literature are agreed in ascribing the more wonderful and fairy portions of these charming stories to Persian if not Hindoo origin. We are as yet ignorant as to whether the Arabs possessed any indigenous chivalric poesy other than the panegyric hero-verse which has been briefly sketched above. But even though some strange production of this sort were at any time discovered, such a circumstance would not naturally invalidate the general proposition.

Elfin-sprites, mountain-goblins, mermaids, giants, dwarfs, dragons, and all the apparatus of fanciful creation, constituted the principal machinery of northern mythology long before the period of the Crusades. These were not borrowed, but bore marks of primeval kindred with Persian demonology. The soft fairy forms of the south, and oriental gorgeousness of colouring, were all that accrued to the West from an acquaintance with the East. But another remarkable point of agreement is yet to be mentioned. Considerable mythological importance is attached to the great Persian epic, in which the Bard—who flourished about the tenth century of our era—collected the various legends of his country's warriors and monarchs. He celebrated them in the richest glow of the language of that time, and the purity of his diction, together with his vivid fancy, earned for him the epithet of "Paradisaic." The splendour of Dschemschid, a hero who embodies in his own person all the perfection and excellence of sublunary greatness, inaugurates this fiction, as the golden age of Persia's ancient glory, and of the whole Asiatic world. But when, after centuries of renown, that Sun of Righteousness sets, and the monarch abandons himself to pride and arrogance, the land of light is given over as a prey to the powers of darkness. The combat between Iran and Turan, the holy domain of light and the wild region of darkness, now become the centre around which all future poetry revolves. The victory of the noble Feridun over the malignant Zohak, and his fruitless contest with the

fiend-like Afrasiab; the universal dominion of the latter, and the gloom that shrouds the whole empire; the advent of Rustan and his successful opposition to lawless violence, until King Chosru eventually terminates the career of Afrasiab's guilt and establishes an historical dynasty: all these are fictions embodying, in the form of heroic legend, the conceptions of a fierce struggle between light and darkness, such as the ancient Persians loved to contemplate. All their other poetry breathes a similar spirit, and expresses a like reference. Most of the Christian poems, dating from the middle ages, are based on a corresponding contest between good and evil, light and darkness, an antithesis, by the bye, to which the Greeks were strangers. Christianity differs from the Persian principles of eternal contention between good and evil, only in so far as this system is extended to the sphere of the Divinity himself, and as the existence of two independent radical powers is assumed. But this distinction appertains, after all, rather to the domains of metaphysics. In the physical, as in the moral world, in nature as in man, Christianity recognizes the contrast of good and evil, the perpetual struggle of light and darkness: and this antithesis is apparent throughout the whole of Christian representation, poesy, and allegory. However this resemblance originated: whether in a similarity of the process of reasoning, or in the fact of blind and obsequious adherence to a beaten track, the inference is precisely the same, and we cannot fail to see the links that connected the imaginative faculties of remote nations.

The later romantic fictions of Persia,—Meschnun and Leila, Chosru and Schirin—in their character of chivalric love-epics, a species unknown to the muse of ancient times, still remind us of mediæval poetry. Yet the wild luxuriance and lavish prodigality of imagery, common in the East, are altogether at variance with Western tastes, whilst the sentiments of love and morality are depicted in a manner still more foreign to the genius of European customs.

On comparing the French *fabliaux* and tales with Arabic stories, it will appear that many legends of the kind were brought to Europe, from the East, probably by the oral narration of the Crusaders. This conjecture, moreover, receives confirmation from occasional variations in details,

as also from the peculiar shape in which some of these narratives appear. The influence exercised may, at the same time, have been mutual, and it is not impossible that, here and there, a novel might have passed over to the Arabs, from the West, during a period of frequent and prolonged intercourse between oriental and occidental nations. No complete or connected epic seems to have been borrowed by Europeans from any Eastern source; for even the fabulous history of Alexander, which afforded the Persians, too, subject-matter for a romantic epic, was taken from some Greek chronicle for the purpose of being remodelled into chivalric poetry. The legends of the ancients having reference to Trojan adventures, were likewise drawn from later popular books, by no means from any of the great poets. Our own age, so rich in historical lore, the first in every kind of imitation, can afford to look down with a certain degree of pride, if not of self-complacency, on such clumsy and childish efforts as Trojan and other chivalrous legends of the middle ages breathing the spirit of the antique. But with all these acknowledged deficiencies, the period referred to had certain compensating advantages, and it is not difficult to understand by what means those Grecian hero-legends rivetted the attention and the admiring sympathy of people in that age. It was the heroic-age of Christendom, and in those Greek legends there was many a feature calculated to suggest reminiscences of chivalry. Tancred and Richard, with their minstrels and troubadours, in many respects resembled Achilles, Hector, and the Trojan rhapsodists much more than did the captains and bards of later and more cultivated times. For the same reason, Alexander's exploits were selected as a theme for minstrelsy to hallow, since, of all historical subjects, without any fabulous additions, they were best adapted to the constitution of an epic from the strange and poetical accompaniments associated with the career of that conqueror.

On the whole, the general intercourse existing between diverse nations at this time, and not without effect on the several peoples of the West, was peculiarly favourable to the interchange of fiction, characteristic of different races and lands. So chaotic was the mixture resulting from this process that, in the sequel, some of the leading native traditions

of Europe resolved themselves into a mere play of the fancy, and were detached from all historical connection.

There is but one general standard of criticism for the great mass of romantic poetry, which, at this time, was either limited to some one of the principal sets of mediæval story, or, if independent of these, was founded on veritable fact. Their value is so much the higher in proportion as they rest on a historical foundation, and have a national import and character; in proportion also as they exhibit the wonderful in poetry, and the free play of the imagination in an unconstrained and natural manner, and especially if they express the spirit of love. I do not mean merely a mild, moderate, and as it were loving treatment of everything that is represented, but rather the spirit which especially distinguishes all Christian poetry; even where the nature of the subject, or the intention of the poet requires a tragical result, it is never with the simple feeling of destruction, ruin, or inevitable fate; but rather a new higher life in a glorified form is called forth from suffering and death, and the earthly victim, after succumbing to sorrow, is represented when the conflict is over, as adorned by a crown of victory in the upper world.

Let us cast another glance at the further development of chivalric poetry, or its early decline among the foremost European nations down to the time of the Reformation: beginning with Germany, whose literature in this respect and at this period, if not intrinsically the richest is at least the most fully known; and ending with Italy, in which country the spirit of chivalry seems never to have had much dominion or impression, and whose poesy very early evinced a decided leaning to the form and manner of the antique.

The actual commencement of the bloom of the old German minstrelsy dates from the reign of the Emperor Frederick the First, in the twelfth century. In the first portion of the fourteenth century the beauty of its early blossom had passed away: from this time, down to the Emperor Maximilian, poetry and the language generally continued to be treated after a manner apparently similar, though not really so. Increasing pains were bestowed on the cultivation of prose, whilst verse as an art was neglected, poetic language gradually deteriorated and hardened, it passed on

to slow degeneracy till the commencement of the sixteenth century, when, simultaneously with the universal shaking of ideas, the instrument of thought, too, underwent a complete change. A barrier, as it were visible, separated and defined the limits of art in the two respective epochs. Before Barbarossa's time the high degree of culture to which Germany had attained, and that eminently distinguished her under the Saxon and early Frankish emperors, would appear to have been of a Latin rather than a purely German cast. The imperial Court and all that was connected with it was sensibly impressed with this stamp. The centralization of power from which emanated decrees affecting, not only the whole of Germany, but likewise one half of Italy, Lotharingia in great part Romanic, Burgundy all but completely so, and which swayed the destinies of numerous petty states, could not have been maintained in full efficiency had any other idiom than Latin been adopted. Hence too those emperors who were for long periods absent from Germany composed in Latin, as for instance some members of the House of Hohenstaufen, though there were others who made use of their own German tongue. But the same reasons that controlled state-action also influenced the commercial policy of Germany: the two principal dialects of the Slavonic and the indigenous idiom, namely north and south German, Saxon and Alemannic, not then coalescing as they subsequently did, but constituting two widely differing languages. The revival of the German language under Frederick the First appears to me not so much due to any private personal exertions he himself made in its behalf, as to the circumstance that there were several princes at this time, whose dominions though not extensive enough to demand the exclusive attention of administration, yet sufficed to secure the independence of their lords, who thus had leisure to indulge their literary tastes. To the courts of Thuringia's Landgraves and of the Austrian Babenbergers collected together an assemblage of poets and minstrels from various quarters. The extant form of the Nibelungen-lied doubtless emanated from some poet resident in Austria. For the country and residence of the poet are indicated not only by great accuracy of local knowledge, but also by a manifest desire to dwell upon and extol Austrian greatness. The Margrave Rudiger, a popular hero of the country, is mentioned not without some violence to chrono-

logy.* The same circumstance may have favourably influenced the descriptions of Attila: for in Hungary, closely allied as it was with Austria, legends relating to Attila were still fresh in the memory of many: he was revered as a national hero, and regarded by all classes with a more than common predilection. When Rudiger reminds Chriemhild, on her hesitating to accept a pagan husband, that many Christian knights and lords were assembled at the Court of Attila, he does so in strict accordance with historic truth.† Another passage is somewhat more startling, in which the mode of life at that Court is represented to have been partly of a Christian and partly of a pagan character: and where it is said that Attila rewarded each according to his deserts and the measure of his life and deeds. Thus poetry arbitrarily changed the character of Attila, the ruthless conqueror, into that of a gentle magnanimous ruler resembling the Christian emperors; whilst she represented Charlemagne, the most energetic of autocrats, as an indolent monarch who accomplishes nothing.

The period at which the Nibelungen-lied was last compiled may, in all likelihood, be fixed in the reign of Leopold the Glorious, the last but one of the line of Babenberg.‡ And since the composer of such a work could not well have been an obscure personage, if we were inclined to point to some one name as the probable author, Henry of Ofterdingen, born in Thuringia but settled in the Austrian dominions, might be mentioned. But whatsoever our opinion on this head may be, now that so noble a poem has been the subject of paraphrase and comment, and like the Homeric songs, been taken in hand by a numerous tribe of critics and poetasters: it is tolerably clear that it did not result from a mere collection of fragmentary legends, but in its present form, was the production of some eminent master of lyric art, who, by the magic of his verse and the skilful combina-

* There is a considerable interval between the two periods.—*Transl. note.*

† Mr. Lockhart is in error in supposing *Chriemhild* to have been of the male sex: she was the wife of Siegfried, and is sometimes called *Gudrun.*—*Transl. note.*

‡ The house of Babenberg derived from the Frankish kings, and was noted for the number of its illustrious scions. Besides Leopold the Glorious, the scourge of rebellious races, Duke Albert, too, proved himself not unworthy of his high lineage.—*Transl. note.*

tion of his materials, has produced a work far surpassing all others of the same kind in that age.

This poem excels all its contemporaries not merely in the picturesque genius of its diction, the tasteful grouping of its subjects, but also in the uniform regularity of its arrangement. The conclusion is almost dramatically perfect: it is divided into six books, these in their turn are subdivided into lesser portions or cantos, like so many rhapsodies suitable to the minstrel's art. The bard has faithfully adhered to the sources whence he drew his inspiration, for with the exception of individualities, few actual traces of the Crusades are observable throughout the work: if there be any such vestiges, they are isolated, and by no means generally characteristic of the spirit which was impressed on most, if not all, of the compositions of that time.

The influence of the Crusades and of other expeditions to the East, necessarily so acceptable to the bards of the period, is much more visible in many portions of the *Hero-book*, which are very unequal in value.

Of the remaining poems of chivalry, those relating to Charlemagne were most probably the first to appear in a German form, but subsequently *Arthur and the Round Table* became a prodigious favourite. Were I inclined to pass a general verdict on the merits of this old German poetry, of chivalrous and romantic contents, or to describe what might have been desiderated, I would say that in its essential spirit and tone it too nearly resembles the Minne-lieder. The perfection of chivalric poesy would, in my opinion, consist in these two points: a thorough identification with the spirit of national legend, and an heroic energetic vigour almost equal to that of an epic, coupled, in those passages that more immediately appeal to the feelings with a tenderness such as pervades the Minne-lieder. And if Christian allegory lent the charms of her poetic beauty to the whole, there would be a desirable accession of calm and transparent depth. I will not now stop to consider whether this ideal standard of perfection has been reached by any of the romantic poets of Italy, England, or Germany. Torquato Tasso appears to have approached nearest to it. A few German versions of stories of that age, especially Tristram, are still extant in musical rhythm and elegant tenderness of expression: they altogether breathe the spirit of the Minne-lieder.

Wolfram von Eschenbach* was, upon the whole, the most artistic German bard of this period: he selected from the story of King Arthur such portions as contained manifest allegory, and an allusion to spiritual chivalry: especially those symbolical traditions relating to the Templars, to which I have referred above. In his own age, Wolfram was equally celebrated, throughout the whole of Germany, with Dante, to whom he may justly be compared, both on account of their common partiality for allegory, and a fondness for parading that erudition in which they certainly excelled all contemporary minstrels. He may be compared to Ariosto in regard to his oriental fulness of detail and gorgeousness of colouring. Old poems, in this respect, resemble old paintings or other works of art; it often happens that when first these are rescued from the dust of ages, their great value is not thoroughly, if at all, appreciated, but when they have undergone a process of restoration, their excellence is patent to all eyes. Comparison can rarely, in full justice, be instituted between poets who flourished in different ages and in the midst of different nations, inasmuch as each constitutes a distinct and separate existence. I therefore prefer adopting another mode of comparison. In the sublime simplicity of idea, as also in the peculiar style of decoration, that characterize these poems, they bear a striking resemblance to the monuments of Gothic art, which still impress the beholder with mixed feelings of astonishment and admiration. The resemblance is further increased by the circumstance that Gothic architecture, like chivalrous poesy, remained, to a certain extent, an Idea, never being fully developed into practical application. Isolated, imperfect, or decaying structures, afford but little insight into their plan or their figurative signification to any one unacquainted with the leading types of Gothic art, and ignorant of the ideas it embodies. The real mediæval, more especially that of Germany, is nowhere so thoroughly expressed as in the memorials of this architectural style, erroneously called Gothic; the origin of which, as also its progressive features, may, to this day, be said to be lost in obscurity and doubt. The misnomer is

* Sometimes called Eschilbach, he lived in the early part of the 13th century.—*Transl. note.*

now generally admitted, and it is commonly understood that this mediæval style of architecture did not originate with the Goths, but sprung up at a later date, and speedily attained its full maturity without exhibiting various gradations of formation. I allude to that style of Christian art which is distinguished by its lofty vaults and arches, its pillars which resemble bundles of reeds, and general profusion of ornament modelled after leaf and flower: totally unlike the older species of art copied from the modern Greek structure of St. Sophia's, Constantinople. There is very little, if any, of the Moorish element in this style: whilst edifices, undeniably Moorish, scattered throughout Sicily and Spain, are of a totally different stamp. In the East too, so-called Gothic structures abound: but built by Christians, being for the most part castles and churches of the Templars and the Knights of St. John. The period during which this peculiar architecture flourished may be said to include the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. Germany was, doubtless, its more immediate home; and, in accordance with its principles, German artists built the cathedral at Milan, to the no small astonishment of Italians at that time. But its adoption was, by no means, confined to Germany or the German Netherlands, but diffused over extensive districts of England, and the north-west of France. We are altogether unacquainted with the real originators of these architectural principles: they could scarcely have been conceived from the designs of one individual master, or his name would, most probably, have been recorded. It is more likely to suppose that the design emanated from some artistic association, closely allied and confederated, in different countries. But whoever the originators, it is evident that their intention was not merely to pile up huge stone edifices, but to embody certain ideas. How excellent soever the style of a building may be, if it convey no meaning, express no sentiment, it cannot strictly be considered a creation of Art: for it must be remembered that this, at once the most ancient and sublime of creative arts, cannot *directly* stimulate the feelings by means of actual appeal or faculty of representation. Its broad import alone, then, enables it to become the exponent of a certain class of sentiments, to arouse the pathos of noble natures. Hence,

architecture generally bears a symbolical hidden meaning, whilst the Christian architecture of mediæval Germany does so in an eminent and especial degree. First and foremost, there is the expression of devotional thought towering boldly aloft, from this lowly earth, towards the azure skies and an omnipotent God. Such is, at least, the impression, though it may not, in all cases, resolve itself into distinct sentiment, on beholding the sublimity of those vaulted arches and those fluted columns. The whole plan is indeed replete with symbols of deep significance, traced and illustrated, in a remarkable manner, in the records of the period. The altar pointed Eastward: the three principal entrances expressed the conflux of worshippers gathered together from all quarters of the globe. The three steeples corresponded to the Christian Trinity. The Quire arose like a temple within the Temple on an increased scale of elevation. The form of the Cross had been of early establishment in the Christian Church: not accidentally, as has been conjectured by some, but with a view to completeness, a constituent part of the whole. From the first, Christian architecture avoided the use of rounded pillars, but since the combination of three or four shafts was not in unison with the laws of artistic beauty, the graceful tubular form, so rich in its simplicity, was adopted. The rose will be found to constitute the radical element of all decoration in this architectural style: from it the peculiar shape of window, door, and steeple is mainly derived, in their manifold variety of foliated tracery. The cross and the rose are, then, the chief symbols of this mystic art. On the whole, what is sought to be conveyed is the stupendous Idea of Eternity, the earnest thought of Death, the death of *this* world, wreathed in the lovely fulness of an endless blooming life in the world that is to come.

I have thus wished to shew, in passing, by an example, to how great an extent some of the phenomena of the middle ages still stand in need of comment and explanation: notwithstanding that ordinary critics are in the habit of indiscriminately rejecting much, of which they know neither the origin nor the real import.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed a leaning, in German poetry, to the moral didactic species, partly alle-

gorical, partly satirical in character. The fabulous story of *Reineke Fuchs* may be cited as a fair example of this style of composition: in which a facetious description is given of the world as it then was constituted, how among citizens and knights, populace and monarchs, the honest man fared the worst, and how, among the lower animals, the wily fox carried off the victory, along with fortune, honour, and dominion. If chivalric minstrelsy had gradually drawn nearer to the regions of fancy till, at last, it completely lost sight of its historic home, the opposite extreme was now resorted to, of compiling detailed metrical chronicles. Thus an effectual barrier was set up between the two constituent elements of genuine epic verse. The two last chivalrous efforts, dating from the period of older poesy, of any importance, were published, and one of them probably composed in part, by the emperor Maximilian—*Theuerdank* and *Weisskunig*. They are of the essence of chivalric poetry, if judged by the spirit that pervades them, and therefore valuable: whilst the garb in which they are clad—half history, half allegory—is anything but happy or fitting, being rather a clog upon that noble freedom which may with truth be styled the last lingering relic of the fine old German spirit.

In France, as in England, whilst the spirit of chivalry continued to exert an influence on society, yet its poetry declined at an early period, before it had attained to any thing approaching to artistic development. In France this species of verse speedily resolved itself into prose, and long tedious chivalric chronicles were substituted for the living strains of the older poetry. The change was not quite so unfavourable in England, inasmuch as, here and there, poetic chords still vibrated with the melodies of the olden time, embodied in romance and ballad. A few French romances, too, are extant, possessing a certain degree of pathetic tenderness; yet, they cannot for a moment compare with the rich tones of English and, especially, Scotch ballads; any more than the Minne-lieder of north-France can vie with the Provence minstrelsy. Of the genuine poets who flourished during the older French period, Thibault, Count of Champagne and King of Navarre, deserves a high, if not the foremost, position. The fictitious histories of Charlemagne and the Round Table were first rendered from Latin into French, and orally per-

petuated in the lays and legends of that language. But we cannot well separate the two countries—France and England—in detailing the literature of this period. When the Minne-lieder flourished, Provence was a fief of the German empire, and under the seignioralty of Burgundy; from the very time that Frederic Barbarossa enfeoffed Count Berengar, the palmy period of the Minne-lied and of intellectual culture generally dates in Provence, separated from the rest of France by a different idiom and mode of government. On the other hand, the northern and eastern provinces were, for the most part, subject to English rule: hence a material share in promoting the development of mediæval chivalry and poesy is attributable not to the inhabitants of France exclusively, but to the Normans in England as well as France.

The well-known Romance of the Rose, famous and distinguished as it was, scarcely permits us to entertain any lofty notion of the early progress of the language. French literature of the fourteenth century does not present any very attractive aspect: chronicles of chivalry were indeed extensively multiplied, but, as far as we are enabled to judge, the language of the age was by no means comparable to either the prose or poetry of Spain and Italy, in point of finished culture or forcible expression. The perfected form of the French idiom was reserved for a more later time. In this respect England likewise advanced but slowly: for even Chaucer, whose talents and attainments were so distinguished that he may be taken as a fair standard for the language of the period, had effected great improvements. It is, perhaps, owing to the terrible wars that England waged against France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as also the sanguinary feuds of York and Lancaster, that a happier development both of language and of poetry was so long retarded in both these countries: moreover, it is not improbable that much has been lost which deserved to be known. But, judging from what remains, the actual literary wealth of France and England may be said to consist in Romances, more especially fabliaux and short tales and novels: from these same sources Boccacio often drew his fictions, but he requited the obligation by flinging around them a profusion of charms and arraying them in fresh grace and attractiveness.

It is worthy of observation in how peculiar a manner French literature at this period justly claimed preference in that particular department in which it has been so distinguished in more modern times. I allude to historical memoirs of celebrated persons and their times; a species of composition arguing great powers of observation, coupled with a lively facility of expression—the graphic features of which give it a resemblance to romance. So early as the time of St. Louis and his trusty companion the Sieur de Joinville, this characteristic excellence of French literature, began the development which it reached at a later period.

Spain has considerable advantages over many other nations, in the possession of its historical epic, *the Cid*. It is this species of poetic art that exerts the most powerful and lasting influence on national feelings and character. A single monument, like that of the Cid, is more invaluable to a people than whole libraries of genius and wit, without national associations.* Even if it does not carry us back to the eleventh century, as is maintained by some, yet the spirit that marks this epic throughout proves its composition to have been antecedent to the Crusades. There is no trace of oriental tastes, or inclination to fable and the marvellous. The single-minded and true-hearted old Castilian spirit is every where apparent: it is, undoubtedly, the genuine history of the Cid, related not long after the occurrences it commemorates took place, the whole arranged as an historic epic. It has before been remarked that heroic legend is, more especially in the mythology of different nations, commonly associated with elegiac, if not tragic, feeling and tone. But there is

* "How the old Spaniards should have come to be so much more wealthy in this sort of possession than any of their neighbours, it is not very easy to say. They had their taste for warlike song in common with all the other members of the great Gothic family: and they had a fine climate, affording, of course, more leisure for amusement than could have been enjoyed beneath the rougher sky of the north. The flexibility of their beautiful language, and the extreme simplicity of the versification adopted in their ballads, must, no doubt, have lightened the labour, and may have, consequently, increased the number of their professional minstrels."—Lockhart's Ancient Spanish Ballads. With great deference to Mr. Lockhart's opinions, it can scarcely be doubted that her frequent warfare with the Moors and other invaders greatly influenced this department of the literature of Spain.—*Transl. note.*

also another and less serious aspect of the heroic character, occasionally depicted by the ancients. Thus, the unwieldy strength of Hercules is sometimes described with comic humour, and many of the adventures of Ulysses do not materially differ from merry pranks. This ludicrous quality is more prominent in the historical consideration of great heroes and magnanimous characters. For though the representation of heroic bravery, and physical strength, be strictly historical, yet the hero himself does not appear in the poetic background of marvellous ages, but in the midst of the realities of life; the greater the contrast afforded by his superiority to the circumstances, the exigencies, the dangers that beset his path, the more scope is there for humorous situations, which, without detracting from heroic grandeur, invest it with an appearance of increased truth and pathos. The Cid abounds in comic passages of this sort: as for instance when Ruy Diaz, in his endeavours to replenish the Exchequer for the purpose of meeting the demands of the Moorish wars, has resource to fraudulent means, viz: depositing a chest filled with stones, instead of gold, as security for a loan advanced by a Jewish usurer. Again, the miracle that took place—when some one was on the point of desecrating the Cid's corpse, by attempting to pull his beard, and forthwith his terrible sword, the scourge of Moorish hosts, all but leaped out of its scabbard, to the dismay and discomfiture of the would-be desecrator. These popular jests are, perhaps, not altogether out of place in a poem of this period: more delicate irony is couched in Donna Ximena's lamentations over the protracted absence of her lord, addressed to the king, and in the monarch's replies to her plaints. The romances translated by Herder* are indisputably of later date: yet they are impressed with the tone and character of the older ballads, and, in the original, possess peculiar unaffected grace, which has not been retained in the somewhat careless version of their translator.†

* Herder's genius inclined to philosophy: the wonder is rather that so studious a disciple of Kant should have done so much, rather than so little, in the domains of poetic translation.—*Transl. note.*

† To shew from how different a point of view critics may regard the same performance it is only necessary to quote Bouterwek's ideas of the Cid, in his "Hist. of Span. Lit.," he says:—"The small portion of poeti-

The Spaniards have as rich a store of romance as the English; but the pre-eminence of the former consists in the circumstance that they are not mere ballads in the more restricted acceptation of the term, a large majority of them being both devised and compiled in the epic form; thus presenting equal attractions to the illiterate and to the educated, since they are at once national in feeling and elegant in tone. The poetry of the people is invaluable as a record of the glorious minstrelsy of the past, but it is not in accordance with her design or with her destiny that Poetry instead of quickening the energies of a collective nation, should alone elicit the sympathies of the uneducated. Such isolated fragmentary verse is apt to become more and more unintelligible with the progress of centuries: and it is most frequently found in those countries whose poetic feeling is indeed strong, but whose legends and national associations of every kind have sustained some violent concussion by long continuance of civil wars or a general revolution in systems of thought.

LECTURE IX.

ITALIAN LITERATURE.—MEDIÆVAL ALLEGORY.—CHRISTIANITY AND POETRY.—DANTE, PETRARCH, BOCCACIO.—GENERAL CHARACTER OF ITALIAN POETRY.—LATIN VERSE OF MODERN TIMES.—INJURIOUS INFLUENCE OF THE SAME.—OLD ROMAN SYSTEMS OF POLITY.—MACCHIAVELLI.—IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the preceding Lectures I have endeavoured to give a general sketch of several European nations—the Germans,

cal colouring with which the dryness of the relation is occasionally relieved, is the result of the chivalrous earnestness of the writer's tone, and of a few happy traits in the description of some of the situations." This hardly coincides with Lockhart, Dillon, Grimm, Southey, or Depping—*Transl note.*

the French, the English, and the Spaniards—with especial regard to their poetry and intellectual culture in the middle ages on to the sixteenth century. The literature of the Italians remains for our consideration, and I have purposely reserved the examination of it until now, since it constitutes the transition from mediæval poetry to the comparatively modern literature of later centuries: a period during which Science and Art were not only revived but extended and improved in a manifold degree.

The Elder Italian poetry is, on the one hand, in close connexion with mediæval philosophy, as in the allegorical masterpiece of Dante: on the other, it was materially influenced by the types of antiquity, its artistic cultivation being in intimate relation with the study of the dead languages. Petrarch and Boccacio were scholars as well as poets, who took the greatest share in the revival of the knowledge of antiquity. Both the spirit and poetry of chivalry made but a faint impression on Italian genius. Dante, at first, intended to compose his great poem in Latin: Petrarch mentions chivalric poetry with aversion and contempt: and though he rendered homage to the prevalent spirit of his age in his artistic love-songs, he was rather carried away by the strong tide of feeling that had set in, than impressed with any conviction of the superiority characterizing the essence or genius of this poetic innovation. Hence, he was content to rest his hopes of fame on a Latin panegyric on Scipio,—with which we now seek no nearer acquaintance than by name—rather than on those love-songs that delight every reader, and will transport his memory and name to the latest posterity. This wavering, so natural on the soil hallowed by the genius of Rome, between old-Latin and new-Italian art and diction, is likewise manifest in Boccacio, the third great writer of early Italian literature. He injudiciously sought to commemorate the ingenious conceits of Provençal love-queries and disputes, as also the interesting novels of northern France, in the too earnest style and sober manner of a Livy or a Cicero. Many of his works are disfigured by unsuccessful attempts to weave ancient mythology into the web of Christian story: and by efforts, not a whit more happy, to express purely Christian ideas and views in the language and myth of antiquity: in

one of his chivalric romances he styles God the Father, Jupiter—the Son, Apollo—and the Prince of darkness, Pluto. The materials for some of his metrical tales are selected from the storehouse of the olden mythology, after the fashion of mediæval times, with whose contents he could not fail to be more familiar than the majority of German and French poets who had preceded him in this course. Indeed, his partiality for the antique, and his uniform desire to blend it with the poetry of his time, were evinced on almost every occasion.

Of the three early Italian poets, Dante was, unquestionably, at once the most copious, dignified, and inventive: his work embraces the whole compass of knowledge open to that age, the whole mode of life common to the later mediæval period, all that came within the scope of his own experience, nay Heaven and Hell as they appeared to his wondrous fancy. There are many similar allegorical poems in the middle ages, especially in the Provençal idiom; but they have either perished or sunk into obscurity, so that Dante towers above all competitors in solitary grandeur. If mediæval poetry be regarded from an independent point of view, apart from ancient theory and art, with which it is by no means compatible, and purely on its own historical merits, it may be classed under three heads: the chivalric, the amatory, and the allegorical. This latter, more particularly, has reference to verse of which the entire aim and scope, internal arrangement as well as external form, are decidedly allegorical, as in the composition of Dante. For in a general sense, the allegorical spirit pervades the whole of mediæval poetry, stamping it with a characteristic impress. The emphatic embodiment of this spirit in a few leading chivalrous works, was pointed out on the occasion of our examining the German version of the Round Table and St. Graal. A difference however obtains; namely, whilst in this chivalrous allegory, mystic meaning is conveyed in representations of life, Dante only inserts his representations of life here and there in the saloons and galleries of his world-wide allegory. Christianity did much to foster an inclination for symbolism which permeates the varied channels of mediæval thought, and that must constantly be borne in mind, if we would understand aright many conceptions of the genius of that age.

On attentively considering the influence exercised by the Bible over mediæval as well as more modern literature and poetry, and the effects of the Scriptures, viewed as a mere literary composition, on language, art, and representation, two important elements engage our observation. The first of these is complete simplicity of expression, or the absence of all artifice. Almost exclusively treating of God and the moral nature of man, the language of the Scriptures is throughout living and forcible, devoid of metaphysical subtleties and of those dead ideas and empty abstractions which mark the philosophy of all nations—from the Indians and Greeks down to modern Europeans—whenever they undertake to represent those exalted objects of contemplation, God and man, by the light of unassisted reason. This philosophy could not escape the hereditary evil of inextricable confusion of opinions constantly warring with one another, and of artificial reasoning, not even when renouncing these high questions and great objects it either retired into the world of sense or veiled itself under a confession of ignorance. Corresponding simplicity, or absence of affectation also characterizes the poetical portions of Holy Writ, notwithstanding the copiousness of noble and sublime passages with which they abound. In point of artistic form and development, the simplicity of the sacred poetry of the Hebrews can in no wise rival the glories of Grecian genius. But on the other hand, in those great works the most perfect bloom of beauty is almost immediately followed by decay—and to the highest perfection of art succeeds most frequently an ambitious and luxuriant taste which delights in superfluous ornament, and overloaded artifice. Many circumstances in connection with man's imagination, his temperament, and his constitution, in the propensities and feelings of his nature, serve to explain this universal tendency in the history of art. Numerous influences vitiate the tender bud of beauty before it is unfolded, or reduce its noble simplicity when matured to a corrupt affectation. Hence, those Christian poets who have handled sacred subjects—Dante, Tasso, Milton, Klopstock—if they at all resemble the great exemplar to which they are indebted for their materials, do so by means of individual features of sublimity rather than by an undeviating simplicity and a total abnegation of what

is artificial. The second distinctive quality of the Bible, in reference to external form and mode of representation, exerting an immense influence over modern diction and poesy, is the all-pervading typical and symbolic element—not only of its poetical but of the didactic and historical books. In the case of the Hebrews this symbolism may partially be regarded as a national peculiarity, in which the Arabs, their nearest of kin, participated. It is not impossible that the prohibition concerning graven images of the Divinity contributed to cherish this propensity: the imagination restricted on one side sought an outlet in another. The same results flowed from similar cases among the followers of Mahomet. In those portions of Holy Writ in which oriental imagery is less dominant, as for instance in the books of the New Testament, symbolism nevertheless prevails. This spirit has, to a great extent, influenced the intellectual development of all Christian races. By its means, and the allegorical bias thence resulting, the Bible stood in much the same relations to mediæval as well as more modern poetry and creative art that Homer did to antiquity: constituting, namely, the fountain and rule and model of all our images and figures. Of course wherever the hidden meaning of emblematical mysteries was not fully understood, or where the aim and object, to which symbolism was degenerated from pristine purity, the bias referred to dwindled down to arbitrary allegory, both fantastic and meaningless: inasmuch as a superabundance of ornament is easier of attainment than a noble simplicity, artificial brilliancy is far more common than the deep gravity of Truth.

Had these two distinctive qualities been universally appreciated, the Bible would indeed have served as a lofty model for all Christian nations, more generally than the art and beautiful forms of the Greeks; and if the Christian spirit had uniformly animated and penetrated mankind, that dignified beauty, which is one with Truth, would have prevailed and had an abiding influence on language and representation, on science as on art. In its own essence, however, Christianity is not a fitting theme for poetry; with the exception of lyric effusions as the direct enunciation of feeling. Christianity is not, of itself, either philosophy or

poetry: yet it is rather that which lies at the very foundation of philosophy, and without which philosophy cannot comprehend itself, but is involved in scepticism, unbelief and endless perplexities. On the other hand, in its essential elements, Christianity transcends all poetry, though its spirit rules here as every where else but invisibly, and cannot be grasped and represented.

The relations of Christianity to poetry and representative art are of the greatest importance, when we come to inquire what relation modern intellectual culture bears to that of antiquity, and the ratio of progress made in civilization generally. Of what value were poesy and art if they continually reproduced ancient shapes and forms from which the spirit has departed? Or, if they pretended to depict present modern life, but confined their descriptions to the face, without once fathoming the depths of the views and feeling peculiar to modern Europe? Hence the oft-recurring efforts of whole nations and ages, hence the earnest exertions of varied genius to glorify the principles of Christianity, not only by means of creative art, but likewise in poetry.

The real answer to the above question seems to me to be included in the observation already made: that the indirect representation of Christian doctrine and its influence on poetry, if not the only genuine process, has, at any rate, hitherto constituted the happiest rule of that art. In this sense, the chivalrous minstrelsy of the middle ages, which, it cannot be denied, never attained to maturity of development any more than Gothic architecture, deserves to be considered as a real Christian heroic poetry; for the very features that distinguish it from the heroic poetry of other nations and ruder ages, are in their nature and origin essentially Christian. This verse is, throughout, suggestive of northern primeval reminiscences: the shapes that flit before the reader's imagination are the shapes commemorated in hero-bands of the olden time, transfigured by the predominant feeling and faith of a love which gives new beauty and meaning to the wildest play of the imagination. But let the poet try to seize directly on the mysteries of Christianity, and they will appear beyond his reach, and will elude his grasp. At least, no attempt of this sort has as yet succeeded in removing the feeling of discord, however great the talents

employed. What I have here advanced is no less applicable to the first of the great Christian bards—to Dante—than to his later successors, Tasso, Milton, and Klopstock. Beyond all others, Dante succeeded in presenting to our view heavenly visions and Paradisaic raptures. Yet it must be admitted that poetry and Christianity are not harmoniously wedded in his poem, of which some passages do not rise higher than didactic theology. Though his genius was cast in a poetic mould, and his imagination was constitutionally fitted for the boldest flights, yet the prevalent doctrine of the schoolmen exerted a great influence over this extraordinary spirit. His unique work is, otherwise, rich and vivid in detail; in the circuit of the three worlds which he undertakes to describe—of darkness, purification and perfect light—he exhibits to our gaze a series of manifold characters and personages, graphically sketched, in the most varied situations: beginning with the lowest abyss of moral infamy and irretrievable agony, and proceeding step by step through the long vista of suffering and hope, until he leads the way to the realms of highest glory. Whosoever has learnt to comprehend his genius, his singular views and aim, and the closely-linked connection of his work, will not fail to discover the harmony that reigns throughout; this work will appear unrivalled, not only for richness of invention and originality of plan, but for the power and perseverance with which the poet has carried it out; it is a defect that the links of connection and simplicity of treatment are not at once clearly apparent, but that a preparatory initiation into a vast extent of various knowledge is necessary in order to understand the poem, either as a whole or in detail. To his contemporaries, and to the succeeding generation, his geography and astronomy did not appear so strange as they do to us; the various allusions to Florentine history were more easily understood, and even the philosophy of Dante was the philosophy of the age. Yet, with all these advantages, a commentary was found to be indispensable to them; and thus the greatest and most truly national Italian bard never, on the whole, became the popular poet of his country. For some generations, indeed, his verse, like that of a second Homer, was made a text-book for critical comment and elucidation by individuals appointed for that purpose in his native town; but now only

isolated passages, selected from the body of his work, have maintained unimpaired vitality. No Italian poet approaches him in grand delineation of character and of the passions—no poet has so powerfully seized the Italian spirit or depicted it so truthfully. The sole objection that can be raised, on this head, is the general harshness of Ghibelline feeling he displays. The Ghibellines, who lived in the latter half of the middle ages, and who aspired to unbounded worldly supremacy, were marked by a spirit of intolerant severity, of fierce hostility—such as can scarcely be realized but by a careful examination of the historic memorials of that time. Later ages, down to our own personal experience, have had their Ghibellines, who staked all the hopes of humanity on the dominion of the sword, ignoring the power of the Invisible Being, which is, nevertheless, sure to assert itself at the appointed season. But these Ghibellines of an over-refined age are more conspicuous for the submissive pliancy with which they are ready to accept any stamp impressed upon them by superior might—a might that rises in their estimation and regard in proportion as it maintains itself in spite of disturbing influences. Inflamed with equal lust of domination, the mediæval Ghibellines were too generally marked by haughty feeling and heroic energy; the combatants were too well matched to admit of similar results. A terrible anarchy, a general ferment of violence and confusion ensued, without any symptoms of that exhaustion which is not only the consequence, but the inviting opportunity and co-operating cause of despotism. This Ghibelline asperity, then, cannot but be imputed as a fault to Dante, softened down, no doubt, and even hidden here and there by the varied charms of melody and fancy, yet not without an influence on the internal beauty and pathos of his poetry.

These are the chief blemishes which, notwithstanding his singular excellence, must be noted in the greatest of all Christian and Florentine bards.

I have already adverted to the position held by Petrarch, on the occasion of my sketching, in a general manner, the Love-songs of various countries, and referring to the peculiar artistic perfection of his muse. His songs are to be classed with this species of composition, and should be compared with those of Spain or Germany to be duly comprehended.

On instituting a comparative examination, Petrarch's especial characteristic will be found to consist in a more artistic spiritual Platonism than is evinced by any other Love-poet of the middle ages. Some of his commentators have gone so far as to contend that his Laura was no historic personage at all, but a mere personification of his ideal fancy. This, in turn, has been stoutly and authoritatively denied; proofs have been adduced from the church registers not only of her actual existence, but also of her marriage and her numerous family; and in a manner still more agreeable, namely, from the lovely portrait of her, executed by Memmi, in the Petrarch collection at Florence. The verse of Petrarch is not deficient in that allegorical spirit which is so generally characteristic of mediæval minstrelsy. In metrical skill, as also in the cultivation of his native idiom, he is undoubtedly entitled to be ranked among the foremost bards who composed in any of the Romanic tongues.

The services that Petrarch rendered to Italian poesy were equalled by the efforts of Boccacio to perfect the structure of prose; yet he never entirely rid it of long complicated sentences, from which Macchiavelli alone is wholly free.

These three Florentine poets—Dante, Petrarch, Boccacio—form an older, severer school of Western poetry, in which allegory was a predominant principle. Each of them had, respectively, been the pioneer in a new direction, had treated the art of representation in a manner peculiar to his own genius. Dante made the loftiest allegory subservient to depicting comprehensive visions and the whole fulness of Christian emblems. Petrarch, in addition to this allegorical system, in which he is far inferior to his great prototype, created a new kind of lyric poesy; and Boccacio struck out a novel path of description in his romances, purely prosaic, or interspersed with poetry. In Boccacio, an allegorical leaning is more particularly evident in his longer compositions; from a similarly mistaken purpose, he endeavoured to revive pagan theology, and reconstruct it for Christian uses, as Dante had attempted to do in several passages of his great poem. All three had numerous imitators, though Dante, unique in manner, was by no means calculated to afford a model for successful imitation; whilst Petrarch's lyrics, and Boccacio's descriptions, could not fail to lose their piquant

character by frequent repetition. Late in the fifteenth century, when the tribe of copyists and servile followers had satisfied themselves that no more laurels were to be gained in this direction, the Italians decided upon venturing into the domains of chivalrous poesy, which Boccacio had previously endeavoured to transplant to the regions of Greek mythology and Trojan fable. Pulci, the Florentine, was the first well-known predecessor of Ariosto. The first impression that is formed of one accustomed to sing his rhapsodies in the courtly halls of the Medici is naturally most favourable; but his muse does not correspond to such sanguine expectations: jest and wit are made to conceal the deficiencies of poetry, and to cover the somewhat ludicrous connection of improbable and unmeaning fictions. It is difficult to determine what portion of his narrative is intended to be sober earnest, and what parody; the wit is so exclusively local and Florentine, that it is all but unintelligible to us at the present day; the whole eminently proves that, at this time, the real romantic element was utterly foreign to Italian tastes. Boiardo, the next of Ariosto's predecessors, is far more happy in his efforts; it was his incomplete production that Ariosto was so desirous of finishing, though the only result of his good offices has been to cast Boiardo into the cold shade of oblivion. The high reputation of Ariosto, in point of inventive fulness and fancy, materially suffers when we learn the sources whence he drew his inspiration. His immediate predecessor furnished him with that rich store of invention and narrative which he showers on the reader with such lavish profusion; nay, even his picturesque style is not his own. His only merit, indeed, consists in evincing greater care, and in manifesting superior facility and grace of metrical diction. Perhaps, too, he has the merit of knowing how to make a happy use of some passages from the Odyssey and Ovid, or from other ancient poets.

It is worthy of observation that the chivalrous poetry of Italy did not attain to its full bloom in Florence, but in Lombardy, where German mediæval architecture first obtained a permanent footing, and where the style of Painting was more akin to the German, or at least not so dissimilar as at Florence or Rome. It is only necessary to take a glance at the constitution of the principal states of older

Italy, to feel the cogency of those reasons that prevented a parallel extension of the spirit of chivalry, or the exertion of its influence on morals or on poetry, with the rest of the civilized West. In Florence, the national spirit was, from an early period quite democratic: the attention of the Venetians was devoted to commercial pursuits, whilst their manners and arts were copied from those of the East, or formed much more after the modern Greek fashion than was the case in the West generally. In Naples, the spirit of chivalry had not been altogether extinguished since the time of the Normans, but having been subjected to the rule of foreign potentates and unsettled by frequent dynastic changes, as well as other impeding causes, Naples participated but little in the intellectual development of northern Italy. Rome, the central seat of the Church, was occupied with her own interests, and what attention she bestowed on artistic matters was turned to the encouragement of the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting, as being most conducive to ecclesiastical splendour, rather than to poetry. If at any time her national reminiscences were awakened, they took a different direction and lost themselves in futile schemes for the regeneration of Rome in her early Republican glory; schemes fondly cherished by Rienzi, and in which Petrarch himself took part and sympathized.

These, then, are among the reasons why the poetry of Italy inclined upon the whole, so decidedly to the spirit of the antique and to philosophy, and was, comparatively, little impressed with the genius of chivalry. Though, on account of its consummate excellence, it exercised considerable influence over other nations, and became, as it were, the common property of civilized Europe.

The pictorial achievements of Italy in the fifteenth century were incomparably more splendid then her poetic efforts; indeed, the art of painting may be said to have reached its greatest perfection at this time, and continued to bloom until the middle of the sixteenth century. Next to the revival of ancient literature; * art most contributed

* This evidently refers to monastic labours, of which Signor Giudici (in his "History of Italian Literature") thus eloquently speaks:—"In secluded retreats and amidst the solemn repose of the monastery, companies of pious and learned men guarded the lamp of human knowledge, whose light was destined thenceforth never to be extinguished. In those

to render the age—which is commonly called the age of the Medici or of Leo X—illustrious. It cannot be disputed that, at a much earlier period than this, individual painters had studied the artistic remains of old classic days, for the purposes of severer drawing and more accurate knowledge of the human figure; and had derived loftier ideas of form and beauty from close study of the antique. But, taken as a whole, there was no imitation of the antique, even among those painters whose familiarity with ancient science was most extensive, though this same knowledge was no common endowment, and, for the most part, denied to the foremost votaries of art. When such imitation began to spread, as it did during the sixteenth century, genuine art was on the wane. At its culminating point of perfection, the genius of pictorial art was thoroughly new and of peculiar vigour: sometimes eminently Christian, intent upon the ideas of Christianity; at other times more particularly national and Italian: in its happiest master-pieces characterized by both of those features in equal degree. Therefore, painting reached a much higher pitch of grandeur at this time than poetry: for what contemporary bard can compare with Raphael? We look in vain for a combination of a Tasso with a Dante, in one and the same genius.

The growth of the poetic mind in Italy, was seldom distinguished by a happy union of grace with profundity, neither was it, at any stage of progress, long free from servile imitation. After the revival of a taste for ancient literature and the general diffusion of names hitherto strangers to popular regard, this country first set the rest of Europe the unfortunate example of copying the form of the antique in compositions of a similar import. Originality of genius was itself not always strong enough to make head against this pernicious influence. Camoens and Tasso, the greatest of modern epic bards, would have developed themselves with far more power, liberty, and beauty if they had been free from Virgilian shackles which cramped their genius and led them astray. But there was yet another mode in

sanctuaries of literature, as well as of religion, the monks were obliged, by the rules of their order, to spend a portion of every day in copying of manuscripts, and thus innumerable inestimable works were preserved and transmitted to posterity."—*Transl. note.*

which the baneful effects of the antique were manifest with respect to poetry and language. The frequent adoption of Latin for the purposes of composition threatened to absorb the vernacular. The fatal example extended to other climes: Germany, where the study of classical literature had been carried on with similar zeal, was the greatest sufferer, and it was not discovered till too late that no poetry can flourish in a dead language. In Maximilian's time none but Latin poets were crowned with Parnassian bays: strange to say, even the drama pointed its moral in that idiom, though the Emperor himself was passionately fond of his native tongue.* The visible degeneracy of the German language, as contrasted with its earlier bloom, is too often ascribed to the civil wars and contentions that raged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These, no doubt, tended to increase the evil: but inasmuch as symptoms of decay began to manifest themselves previous to the Reformation, and in the case of writers whose style had been formed at an earlier period, the inference seems inevitable: namely, that the vernacular was systematically sacrificed to the Latin language. The results were more sensibly and painfully evident in Germany than in Italy; for the former had not yet arrived at mature consistency and regularity as a whole: whilst the great Florentine masters of the fourteenth century had bequeathed that country a standard of their native language which none of the modern Latin writers could set aside.

The fault of all this must not be placed to the account of ancient literature, but to the abuse of it. The salutary extension of historic as well as every kind of human science in the fifteenth century, an acquaintance with the splendid memorials of art and intellect, these things in themselves, were an inestimable benefit. But we should be in error if we supposed that this rich harvest of knowledge was every where productive of wholesome fruits without any tares: or that, when gathered, the crop was uniformly turned to so advantageous an account as we should now desire and expect. In this respect the spirit of the modern inhabitants

* In his "Lectures on Modern History" Schlegel says of this prince:—"He composed several works, and selected moreover the German language, although he was versed in all the other tongues then current in Europe, and, as a man of business, was familiar with Latin."—*Transl. note.*

of Europe exhibits traces of greater similarity to former times than is commonly believed. All of them evince an equally passionate curiosity, a restless activity, prompting them to seize, with rude grasp, on acquisitions, mental or physical, that promised for a time to lend a prominent interest to some peculiar department of social organization: thereby endangering the moral equilibrium, and inviting sudden and momentous changes involving revolutions, with all their train of horrid and destructive consequences. Thus in the time of the Crusades, when near contact with the East was the means of introducing Arab lore,* when the philosophy of Aristotle became dominant, and various nations learned to be on familiar terms with each other, intellectual activity all at once received an incredible impetus, and a whole world of new ideas was set in motion. But it is now universally admitted that the mighty impulse which mental activity received in the thirteenth century was not so beneficially applied as might have been wished. It called forth, generally speaking, a mere sectarian spirit, which in the ranks of the school-men, assumed a barbaric form, and was not long in manifesting its destructive efforts in the Church, the state, and civil life. Of all the suddenly enriched and intellectually fruitful periods of European History, the fifteenth century is perhaps the most splendid. It was then that the systematic use of the compass assisted maritime discoveries, led the way to India and America, opening up to Man—who may be said to have now come of age—a distinct and comprehensive view of the earth his dwelling-place. In connection, be it remembered, with the stimulus given to his mind by the revival of ancient literature, and the invention of printing: which, at first and in its appliances, can have fallen but little short of the miraculous in general estimation. But even here, as I shall be able to shew by and bye, the observations I have made respecting the immediate operation of great discoveries is not out of place. The third important revolution in the domains of science and in the direction of the modern European

* "Next to the influence which the further development of chivalry exercised upon the constitution of Europe, the effects of the Crusades upon commerce, its extension, and direction, is one of the most visible and striking."—Schlegel's Lect. on Mod. Hist.—*Transl. note.*

spirit is nearer our own times. The onward strides of mathematics and physics in the seventeenth century, progressing in still greater ratio during the eighteenth, gave so great an extension to mechanical and technical facilities of every description as materially to alter the economic arrangements of the human race. Who is there that would pretend to deny the intrinsic excellence of these sciences, or the elevating tendency they have to promote the sovereignty of man over matter and the world of sense—a sovereignty entirely harmonizing with his original dignity and destiny? But was this supremacy over matter combined with self-control? Did the system of thought arising out of physical and mathematical investigation give a happy and normal tone to social morality? The consequences of this mode of thinking and the philosophy to which it gave rise on religion and morals, on political and common life, have been so clearly developed, that they are now generally acknowledged to have been unfortunate and hurtful, and in a short time, no difference of opinion will exist respecting them.

I return to the fifteenth century. I have already mentioned the injury which the exclusive partiality for the literature and language of antiquity inflicted, in checking the progress of the vernacular language, and of the poetry of modern times. We need be the less surprised at the many fluctuations and aberrations of this period, when we observe that the history of modern intellect presents scarcely anything else than a constant struggle between the old and foreign—which is indispensable as far as knowledge and form are concerned—and the new, the peculiar, and the national, which latter must be the vital spirit of all living, effective, national literature and poetry. It is by no means improbable that some of the modern Latinists of the fifteenth century, in Italy, were actuated by a desire altogether to supplant the vulgar tongue, and to re-establish the language of ancient Rome. For not only were the olden mythology and idiom again introduced with applications singularly inapposite to Christian themes: for instance, it was deemed more elegant to substitute such an expression as "the gods," in lieu of the singular number which we usually employ in speaking of the Supreme Being: but the very usages and arrangements of ordinary life were fashioned after the model of pa-

ganism, or we might say, aped, with fanatical ardour. So that it can hardly be doubted, that it was more than a passing fancy on the part of some to reinaugurate the religious superstitions of ancient times. There is, however, no necessity to dwell on such extravagancies as these, which could never be realized. More importance, for obvious reasons, is to be attached to the revival of old Roman ideas in the person of Macchiavelli, who flourished at this time. In style and historic skill he is unique, worthy of the first rank of Italian, and, indeed, of modern prose writers generally, and fairly comparable to the first historians of antiquity. With the energy, simplicity, and straight-forwardness of Cæsar he joins the profound reflection of Tacitus, and is more lucid than the latter. He has taken no one writer as a model, but saturated with the essential spirit of classical antiquity, he seems to have made it his second nature to employ the forcible, animated, and appropriate expressions of the most brilliant ancient writers. The form of representation would seem never to have cost him any trouble, his constant care being directed to the thought. But how are we to justify, or even familiarly illustrate the doctrines of that state-policy which he was at such pains to propagate, and which met with a success all too complete? The ideal standard of a ruthless tyrant which he sets up, as it were, for the instruction of sovereign rulers has been sought to be palliated on the plea of his intention to depict, in graphic colouring, the political degradation of his age and country.* But, though it has been satisfactorily ascertained that Macchiavelli was both a republican and a glowing patriot, this interpretation will not suffice to vindicate his memory from grave imputations. It may, perhaps, be more correct to seek the explanation in his patriotism, taken in connection with his other political views and principles. It is as if he had tacitly wished contemporary aristocracy to infer that, in order to liberate Italy, the self-same means must be adopted that had contributed to enslave her, of however impure or desperate

* Professor Gervinus, in his "Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century," says:—To Macchiavelli, Ferdinand the Catholic appeared the living type of a prince of the new school, such as his austere judgment led him to declare to be the necessary remedy for the times.—*Transl. note.*

a nature they might be; that the foe to liberty must be foiled by his own weapons; that all measures are lawful in so sacred a cause. The opinion he entertained of foreigners may be learnt from the extremely curt yet remarkable contrast which he institutes between French and German character. With wondrous sagacity he observes that the Germans, as a nation, are not nearly so powerful as they are generally supposed to be, whilst the dominion of French monarchy is represented as tremendous and ever increasing. This pithy declaration is anything but flattering: for by it he charges the one with mendacious insincerity, native and constitutional: and alleges of the other, that the same unbounded love of freedom, which, in its unrestrained career, had already unsettled the empire, by means of internal dissension and tumult, would in time destroy its independent vigour and cause its dissolution.

Such was his opinion of other nations, and when we consider the state of Italy at that time, more particularly his native city, we cannot altogether blame him. But his principles, relative to the propriety of combatting the most formidable foes of his country, those within the walls, by means of weapons similar to their own, cannot, for a moment, admit of justification. For the desperate condition of the state was not brought on by the baseness or the guilt of her tyrants, so much as by the extensive diffusion of noxious principles and tendencies, which gave impunity to these acts.

The most startling peculiarity in Macchiavelli remains to be considered: it does not consist in his axiom, so often quoted and refuted, that the end sanctions the means; but rather in his endeavours to institute a political system, in the heart of modern Christian Europe, of such an import and general spirit as totally to ignore Christianity, nay, the very existence of God and retributive justice. Though this Christianity had hitherto been commonly regarded as the hallowing medium of brotherhood, the bond of union, among the several states of Europe. The recognized right of sovereigns to rule over their subjects was in proportion to their obedience to the will of God: on this supposition alone their supremacy was vindicated. All principalities, jurisdictions, and rights, were still based on the invisible

groundwork of the Church. Now of all this state-economy Macchiavelli takes not the slightest notice: not only does he *write* in the true spirit of Paganism, but he *thinks* so likewise, and in the most emphatic manner. Just as the power of ancient Rome was founded, in the main, on violence and fraud, and justice was regarded as superfluous or an ornament of no intrinsic value: so Macchiavelli regards force and intelligence as the most potent levers of state-machinery. The idea of justice is altogether left out of the question: neither ought this to amaze us, seeing that all his views of the mechanism regulating the policy of states and people are founded on his conceptions of force and intelligence, without the slightest reference to God. As surely as honour cannot exist in the absence of virtue, so impracticable is human justice without a firm belief in the Almighty: that is, other than a mere external form and hypocritical cloak to conceal the inner wickedness of the heart, the grasping covetousness of fraud and violence. With disbelief in God and his dispensations towards man, every other kind of scepticism in things invisible to sense is necessarily joined. But it is the invisible on which the visible rests, and as the immaterial soul is the life of the body, so the idea of God is the vivifying principle of nations and of states. Let this animating principle be once withdrawn, and the whole dissolves and becomes an inert ponderous mass. Or if any vitality be left in individual nations, it is a fermenting energy that preys upon all within, scattering death and destruction over external objects. As soon as God and Justice are forgotten by states, Anarchy and Despotism, those monsters of darkness, rise from their gloomy abodes, and occupy the deserted place of Justice.

It should not be supposed that Macchiavelli is to be held responsible for that political dissolution of which alarming phenomena manifested themselves with increasing virulence, notwithstanding the manly efforts of various upright and Christian rulers to oppose its progress. For this no individual is solely accountable: these evils had struck too deep a root. Yet whosoever reduces existing evil to definite and applicable principles, systematizes and extends its operation, and on this account Macchiavelli's policy undeniably had a disastrous and pernicious influence on succeeding generations.

The two great discoveries of the fifteenth century, the art of printing and the use of the compass, which latter, though of earlier date, was not applied with any beneficial results until the time of Columbus, were accompanied by some others of equal importance: the use of gunpowder and that of paper. Both of these, too, are of much earlier date, but their general application was only marked by momentous results in that age. These wonderful inventions have, in the aggregate, very materially altered the aspect of human society. Much in the same way as some nations of primitive history were separated from the savage tribes who were ignorant of the instruments of connection between man and the earth; as, for instance, the use of iron for civil and war-like purposes, the employment of written characters, and a metallic currency, which form the cement of social union, points of contact bridging remote tribes and groups of mankind, the past with the present, so the invention of printing and the use of the magnetic needle constituted, as it were, a chasm that cleft asunder the old world from the new.

These discoveries furnish the best proof of the fact, that more depends upon the use which is made of important gifts than on the gifts themselves. The compass was within reach of many other nations, yet they neither circumnavigated the earth nor discovered America. Printing and paper have long been employed by the Chinese in the manufacture of gazettes, bills, and visiting cards; but their national genius has in no way been benefited by the action of this wonderful machinery.

Gunpowder was looked upon as a perilous and hurtful contrivance, even in those periods in which it came into common use. Not only did poets, like Ariosto, inveigh against it as an unlucky invention, calculated to undermine personal bravery and sap the foundations of chivalry: statesmen and soldiers concurred in this view, and uttered similar lamentations. But such apprehensions as these were, at the least, ill-founded: real courage will find free scope for its activity in any sphere. Under new phases, the modern art of warfare has produced heroes who will bear comparison with the greatest captains of pagan or chivalrous days. But, upon the whole, an invention expanding the limits as well as

accelerating the frightful ravages of war, systematizing, so to speak, the agency by which mankind decimate their species, is not to be classed with the happiest features of modern improvement. I will only adduce a single example, drawn from the first era of its practical application. Without the medium of gunpowder, the conquest of America, that followed hard upon the heels of its discovery, would not have been marked by those scenes of desolation, those barbarous atrocities, that brand the historic page.* In this respect, the demon of destruction would seem to have directed and impressed the first impulses of a wonderful discovery.

Regarding the use of *paper*, likewise, reasonable doubt may be entertained if the operations of printing have conferred those advantages on the world which might have been expected, by the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of intellectual development; or if injurious consequences, with tainting influence, have not in many cases resulted. During periods of anarchy and revolution, this facile medium of sedition and inflammatory excitement may be said to have partaken of the destructive character of gunpowder. The introduction of a rarer and costlier material might have kept the art of printing more true to its primary purpose, namely, that of perpetuating the genuine memorials of history, art, and science; whilst now, the most important records of civilization are too frequently neglected for the circulation of ephemeral, flippant productions. A second deluge of impurity has set in; the dignity of language has been degraded into buffoonery; a sea of superficial fancies

* For a detailed account of the cruelties perpetrated by the Spaniards in Peru, the reader is referred to the well-known pages of Prescott and Robertson. Schlegel's views on the advantages of gunpowder will be appreciated by those theorists who believe in the possibility of universal peace on earth. The Translator ventures, deferentially, to entertain an opposite opinion, even in the face of such high authority. The greater the economy of punishment in war, the more is that necessarily likely to be mitigated. If State policy were less tortuous, gunpowder would not be in such frequent requisition. With regard to many of the commercial adaptations of the material in question (blasting, &c.), it would be difficult to procure a substitute equally convenient in all respects.—*Transl. note.*

is freighted with puerile conceits, and the spirit of the age is ever and anon in danger of losing the compass of Truth.*

LECTURE X.

Literature of the Northern and Eastern Nations of Europe.—Scholastic Divinity and German Mysticism of the Middle Ages.

My representations of modern European development have hitherto included only the nations of the South and West, the Germans, and those countries in which the Romanic dialects were adopted: Italy, France, Spain, and England. The literature of these lands is indisputably the most remarkable and important, both from its intrinsic merits and wide-spread influence. It would, however, be more in accordance with my own wishes, as well as my conceptions of a complete history of literature framed in a liberal spirit, to bring the principal nations of the North and East within the limits of my undertaking. Every independent people, of adequate consequence, have a right, too sacred to be disallowed, to the possession of a literature eminently and peculiarly their own; and it is a mark of the grossest tyranny to suppress the idiom of a country, or to wish to check its advances in intellectual culture. It is a common prejudice to suppose that certain neglected or obscure languages are not susceptible of greater improvement and higher perfection. Doubtless, some idioms are, to a certain extent, antagonistic to poetry, and extremely unfavourable to its impressions; but none are so constituted as not to admit of being turned to good and serviceable

* It is to be feared that our author has here advanced an unguarded statement: *dormitat Homerus* may be said of him. Surely the manifold advantages of paper—the cheaper the better—are not counterbalanced by the abuses named! The weapons of anarchy are harmless if they have no keener edge. The literature of the 18th century, when paper was dearer, teemed with impurities. In fact, the absence of impurity was the exception rather than the rule.—*Translator's note.*

prose, suited alike to the exigencies of daily life and the requirements of ordinary science. If it be argued that the literature of a comparatively insignificant country can have exercised little direct influence on others, we should be disposed to answer, that the history of its intellectual development in proportion to its prosperity, its fortunes and its history, cannot but be very interesting and instructive. Though I am stating the conditions of a complete history of literature, I cannot hope to fulfil them myself. In this department of criticism, more perhaps than in any other, it is undesirable to trust to the conclusions of others without investigating the circumstances that have led them to arrive at the same: but to do this effectually, an acquaintance, if not familiarity, with the several European idioms is indispensable. Limiting myself to general observations, I would direct attention to the state of collective Europe. The sixteenth century, constituting as it does a partition wall which separates the middle ages from our own times, seems peculiarly suitable to a general survey like this. In reference to intrinsic merits and their influence on other nations, the Romanic tongues had a decided advantage and superiority. Their close affinity to one another, and resemblance to their mother-tongue the Latin, which was at one time common to the whole Christian West, rendered the facilities of acquiring them greater than in the case of any language radically different. On this account, long before the effects were felt of commercial or political inducements, they were more extensively diffused than German and the other languages of the north and east of Europe. Spain, indeed, never came into very close communion with the north or west, from which she seemed severed not more by geographical position than by the genius of her polity, her customs, and her intellectual efforts. More justice than was at one time wont has of late been accorded to the excellence of Spanish literature and language. But so much of former prejudice still exists as to restrict the consideration and regard of critics to the beauty of her poetry, whilst it is an incontrovertible fact, that of all Romanic idioms, this was the one in which prose attained to a maturity at once earliest and fullest. Portuguese prose was, at an early period, equally soft and agreeable with the Spanish: but the latter speedily outstripped

her sister-dialect in copiousness as well as nice distinction of expression. With the exception of Macchiavelli, Italy can boast of no great prose writer in the departments of practical knowledge or political science. The earlier prose attempts in other Romanic tongues are, for the most part, destitute of form and shape. In France and England prose was not sufficiently developed for the purposes of practical application and of political eloquence until the seventeenth century; and its use was more particularly confined to the metropolis and the higher classes of society. In Spain the vernacular was, from an early period, adopted in legislation and other business of importance. The very isolation of that country from the rest of Europe may have materially contributed to an accelerated development of the language: rich as it is in well-written historical works, and in a manly eloquence that has survived to our own day: an eloquence, moreover, impressed with the noblest characteristics of fiery genius, and occasionally interspersed with appropriate wit and caustic sarcasm. In the higher philosophy Spain has had fewer names of note than Italy or Germany: indeed, she cannot boast of a single writer claiming the first distinction in philosophic annals.

The German, being a language by itself, was not only much more difficult of acquisition than the Romanic idioms, it was necessarily less widely disseminated than these: hence the literature and intellectual progress of Germany were frequently misrepresented, because not understood, by nations ignorant of the language. Nevertheless, I feel fully able to justify the position which I have assigned to that country in this history of literature. Notwithstanding the restricted diffusion of the German language, the profound inquirer into the antiquities of the south and west will find it necessary, at intervals, to retrace his steps to German sources. Together with the framework of German constitution, and the economy of daily life, much of the Germanic spirit, too, was infused into the polity and systems of foreign nations. It is not saying too much to maintain that no acquaintance with mediæval history can be complete, which does not embrace a comprehensive survey of the genius and language of Germany. Just as France and England were the foremost powers, both in politics and in literature, of the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, so Italy and Germany were the sanctuaries of all civilization during the middle ages. The greatest and most pregnant invention of the fifteenth century—the art of printing—was of German origin; from the same source proceeded those religious convulsions in the sixteenth century, which shook the fabric of a mighty institution to its very centre, and gave a new direction and fresh impulse to the energies of Christian Europe. If the German language be not, as yet, equally adapted with English and French, to the intercourse of the social circle, to the practical business of life, to protocols, and political eloquence, on the other hand, like Italian, against which a similar charge has been brought, it contains elements most favourable to poetry. Since the decline of ancient Greek, no other tongue can compete with German in copiousness and singular adaptation to the expression of loftier philosophic truths. In the imitative arts, whilst most of the other highly civilized nations took scarcely any important part, Germany is second only to Italy. She was slow, indeed, in manifesting her productive power as regards modern literature, since the revolutions of the sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth, a season during which a great portion of the rest of Europe was extremely prolific: yet even this may not have operated to her prejudice. It may reasonably be expected that in the domains of history and philosophy, late writers possess obvious advantages over their predecessors. The premature literary exertions of some countries were followed by exhaustion and intellectual prostration during the latter half of the eighteenth century: whilst Germany exhibited remarkable fertility. Though individual defects are still visible, the time is not very far distant when a knowledge of German language and literature will be recognized as an inevitable necessity by the cultivated mind of foreign nations.

Of the northern and easternmost nations, the Scandinavians took the greatest share in the mental growth of the west during the middle ages. I have previously endeavoured to convey some idea of the influence they exercised on European poetry, on the occasion of my adverting to the migratory Northmen or Normans. They joined in the Crusades, and accordingly participated in the benefits connected with them, and their effects on the imagination and

intellect generally. Numbers of enterprising Icelanders traversed every part of Europe for the purposes of literary discovery: and, to gratify the longings of curiosity, they explored all known sources of knowledge and fiction. In their *Edda* they possessed the oldest genuine record of the poetry of the Germanic races, and of the whole mediæval period; subsequently they imported into their country the Christian chivalric epics of the south of Europe. In some of these, more especially in German heroics, they were not a little surprised to find a striking similarity to their own northern legends with shapes that, here and there, they recognized as familiar to their memory. These objects of popular interest were then remodelled in varied form and manner; and, taken in connection with Gothic and German epics of the same period, they constitute, as it were, a separate northern school in the poetry of the West; a school that presents many features differing from the romantic spirit and southern fancy of the Latin races. All the impressions of pagan and northern descent in these Scandinavian fictions, marvellous creations, and whatsoever also was clearly traceable to heathen mythology, appealed to their sympathies in a peculiar manner, being in more immediate affinity to the fountain-head of their Edda. The element of the wonderful, a mere sport of the imagination in southern poetry, an idle ornament in the armory of chivalry, embodied in emphatic meaning, a deep significancy and truth, in the efforts of the northern muse. From this point of view, the northern arrangement of the Nibelungen-lied asserted individual claims to consideration, superior to those of the German epic. Iceland and Scandinavia had, likewise, a peculiar chivalric minstrelsy, in the middle ages, which, like that of other countries, at first merged into prosaic annals, and was subsequently dispersed in fragmentary popular lays. This was more especially the case in Denmark, England, and Germany, during the epoch of religious disputes, when the change that came over ecclesiastical and civil life occasioned a long interruption in the transmission of national memorials, so that only a few faint echoes of minstrelsy were heard, which soon died away in broken and lisping numbers. For this reason the ballads of England* and Germany, of Scotland and Denmark, are worthy

* *Ritson's* Old English Ballads will well repay the trouble of perusal.—*Transl. note.*

of being carefully stored up, as the priceless relics of a well-nigh forgotten past. The olden literature of the north was common to all Scandinavian nations. With the Reformation a serious interruption seems to have set in; the native historians of Danish as of Swedish literature, are also accustomed to regard the introduction of High-German, imported with Protestantism, as fatal to the development of the vernacular idiom. The later literary history of Sweden is adduced by her own critics in support of the maxim that no nation, however rich in characteristic feeling and sentiment, can aspire to the possession of a native literature so long as it continues to attach and devote itself to alien standards. It is interesting to observe with how independent and self-possessed a spirit Denmark has, of later years, advanced in the fields of learning, bearing a manifest resemblance in her genius, to Germany and England. The common bond of union connecting the German language with that of the northern countries already referred to, is equally valid for the purpose of linking together the poetry of Germany, England, and Denmark. This communion does not extend to the regions of philosophy; and yet, it may safely be predicted that the future renown and success of all races, descended from Germanic lineage, will in a great measure depend on their common progress in philosophic pursuits.

There is one circumstance which forcibly suggests a comparison between Scandinavia, as it was constituted prior to the Reformation, and Spain, it is this: both of these countries, when they had attained to a high degree of political and intellectual superiority, isolated themselves from the rest of Europe, and formed, each for itself, a distinct and exclusive whole. For, though the Northmen, equally with the Spaniards, took part in the prevailing chivalry of the middle ages, with which they were familiar of yore; and though, in the course of their travels, they enriched themselves with the learning of southern Europe, still, it is abundantly evident there was not so intimate or so frequent an intercourse, on the part of either, with foreign countries, as that subsisting between England and France from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, or between Italy and Germany from the ninth to the sixteenth. The growth of the Scandinavian mind had a purely national bent: being espe-

cially directed to poetry, history, and similar subjects, with the slightest possible leaning to higher philosophical investigation; at least, in an earlier period, they were equally deficient with Spain in eminent philosophical enquirers. It is a matter worthy of serious consideration to observe how completely the four central countries of Europe—Italy, Germany, France, England—as they have monopolized the political history of modern times, so also from the first dawn of European civilization under Charlemagne, down to our own day, they have taken a permanent and prominent interest in the development of philosophy, in her noble progress, or her retrogression; indeed, in all that affects her history and marks her career. The national diversities and tendencies of Philosophy in these countries will be indicated in the proper place.

Among the Sclavonic races, Russia had several native historians in early mediæval times,—an inestimable advantage, and an unmistakeable proof of a commencing intellectual development. It is highly probable, judging from the existence of a flourishing commerce, from intimate relations uninterruptedly maintained with Constantinople, and from other circumstances, that Russia had made considerable advance in civilization previous to the Mogul devastations. But her connection with the Greek Church was the means of isolating Russia, during mediæval and more modern times, politically and intellectually from the West. Of other Sclavonic lands, Bohemia was in possession of an extensive and valuable literature, under her own Charles IV., a nearer acquaintance with which might prove important in an historical point of view; from what is at present known of it, it would appear to have been more complete in the departments of history and science than in that of minstrelsy. I am not in a position to test the accuracy of the assertion, that Poland had a vast store of poetic reminiscences before the middle ages; the alleged aptness of the language for poetic cultivation, as also some of the peculiarities inherent in the national character, would seem to favour the remark. But, even if this were not the case, and if the Sclavonic nations of the middle ages were not endowed with such rich poetic treasures as those of German extraction, and adopting the Romanic idiom, a general explanation might, without much

difficulty, be offered. Their participation in the Crusades was, at the best, very slight in proportion. Indeed, I am strongly inclined to question if they took any interest in them at all. The spirit of chivalry was either altogether strange to their notions, or by no means as dominant with them as in the West. Perhaps, too, the mythology of the Sclavonic races, previous to their embracing Christianity, was more barren than that of the Germans; or it may have been eradicated in too sudden and violent a manner. Though of cognate origin with the noblest idioms of ancient and modern times, and flexible in their grammatical structure, the Sclavonic tongues do not, on the whole, appear to incline naturally to the cultivation of poetry.

There is no doubt that, from the earliest times, the Hungarians had a fine collection of epics composed in their own primitive tongue. The engrossing theme of their poetry was, most probably, an account of the conquest of the country under the "Seven Chiefs." It is tolerably certain that these legends of heathen antiquity were not entirely extinct even after the introduction of Christianity, since the writers of the national chronicles bear testimony to having seen lays of corresponding import with their own eyes. This view is further confirmed by the fact that Revaj, a celebrated Hungarian scholar, himself assisted in rescuing from oblivion a ballad of this sort: it treats of the immigration of the Magyars into Hungary. The chronicle recorded by the secretary of King Bela,* eminently distinguished in Hungarian history and jurisprudence, is, in all probability, made up of similar historical lays, turned into prose by the compiler, with the addition of sundry opinions and illustrations, the coinage of his own brain. He does not at all deserve the caustic sneers with which he has been assailed by various critics. The Chronicle in question, though mutilated and necessarily imperfect, should be favourably accepted, and regarded as an important collection of national ballads, without attempting to fasten upon it extraneous matter and alien disputes. Attila, whom Hungary honoured as a native war-

* Mr. Lockhart has confounded the secretary with his royal master; of is unquestionably the former who compiled the Chronicle to which reference is made. There were four Hungarian monarchs of the house it Bela (1060—1270).—*Transl. note.*

rior-king, was a favourite subject of the national muse. There is abundant proof throughout the Chronicles of the celebration of Attila's prowess, and that of the Gothic heroes with whom he is associated in the Niebelungen and the Helden-buck in Hungarian song, extant until comparatively late times. These olden traditions probably survived till the reign of Matthias Corvin,* who was desirous of Latinizing or Italianizing his kingdom all at once; when, as might be expected, the language fell into desuetude, whilst the traditions and sweet memories of other days, around which nations, like individuals, love to linger, disappeared from the scene. Thus it fared with Hungary, in the fifteenth century, just as it would have fared with Germany in the eighteenth, had the great soldier-king,† who wielded a German sceptre, and who was equally intent on sacrificing the intellectual development of his country in the beginning of the last century, possessed as unlimited a sway over the *whole* of Germany as Corvin did over Hungary. But, whatsoever of Hungarian legendary poetry and glorious reminiscence escaped the deadly flow of foreign pseudo-refinement, probably perished altogether under the devastations of the Turks. Some remains of the national genius for historical epics lingered in the country, and survived her destruction. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced a few masters in this species of composition; and, in our own times, Kisfalud, a bard of considerable feeling, has celebrated his country's traditions on the lyre he had formerly attuned to Love.‡

* Matthias Corvinus, sometimes styled Hunnyades from his family name, one of the most warlike monarchs of a warlike race. His encounters with the Turks were frequent and sanguinary: but his arms were generally crowned with victory. He married the Princess Beatrix of Naples.—*Transl. note.*

† Frederick the Great, of Prussia, on all occasions preferred the French language to his own. His influence was fatal to the interests of German literature.—*Transl. note.*

‡ Professor Creasy, in his admirable work, "The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World," (7th Edition), when remarking on the battle of Pultowa, takes occasion to allude to the Sclavonic race. He says:—"Let it not be supposed that in thus regarding the primary triumph of Russia over Sweden as a victory of the Sclavonic over the Germanic race, we are dealing with matters of mere ethnological pedantry, or with themes of mere speculative curiosity. The fact that Russia is a Sclavonic empire, is

Let me close these sketches of the literature and language of the less important countries of Europe with a general remark, to which I have already alluded. Every free and independent nation may claim the right to a native literature—that is, an idiomatic literary development of language. Without this, the national genius will never be self-possessed, or enjoy an immunity from certain barbaric associations. It would be absurd to misconstrue this assertion into undue and partial predilection, ignoring the utility of acquiring foreign idioms. For the purposes of ordinary mental culture, and for private reasons, an acquisition of the classical languages of antiquity, as also of several of the modern, will always be found desirable and proper by some. Of these, external circumstances will regulate a fitting selection. The adoption of a foreign idiom in the business of legislation and jurisprudence is, at all times, exceedingly oppressive, if not positively unjust; when employed in administering state affairs, and in the social intercourse of the upper classes, it cannot fail to exercise a fatal influence on the language which it has undertaken to supplant. But where such a proceeding is once established, it becomes an inevitable, though reluctant, necessity on the part of individuals to conform to usage. It is, then, a matter for the influential interference of the upper classes to interpose the weight of their authority between two extremes: namely, to render to stern necessity what necessity exacts, and not to be unmindful of the sacred duty they owe their country. The guardianship of the language of a country is, as it were, confided to the care of the upper classes of society—let them not abuse that trust. It should be the earnest endeavour of every educated person to maintain inviolate the purity of his native language by precept and practice; pains should be taken to become familiar with the history of its rise and

a fact of immense practical influence at the present moment. Half the inhabitants of the Austrian empire are Sclavonian. The population of the larger part of Turkey in Europe is of the same race. Silesia, Posen and other parts of the Prussian dominions are principally Sclavonic. And during late years an enthusiastic zeal for blending all Sclavonians into one great united Sclavonic empire has been growing up in these countries, which, however we may deride its principle, is not the less real and active, and of which Russia, as the head and champion of the Sclavonic race, knows how to take her advantage."—*Transl. note.*

progress, equally with the history of his country. This resolution cannot but be facilitated by the acquisition of foreign idioms, since pursuits of this nature are calculated to increase intelligence generally and to strengthen the faculty of expression. The practical application of all acquired tongues should be severely restricted to occasions when they are really indispensable. Upon the higher classes it is especially incumbent to do all in their power towards promoting the healthy growth of their native language: they have a peculiar interest in the welfare of their country, and their responsibility is in this respect commensurately proportioned. A nation whose idiom is in process of decay, or is sensibly on the road to deterioration, will itself, eventually, succumb to barbaric rudeness. A nation that tamely looks on whilst it is being despoiled by its idiom, forfeits the respect due to independence—is degraded in the ranks of civilization. But, however formidable the pressure from without of threatened violence in eradicating the indigenous idiom of a country, however serious the injury inflicted by the introduction of foreign expressions, and the adoption of the same by a servile crew of imitators: the danger ceases to be imminent as soon as it is recognized. In all things that are not subject to the hazard of the moment, but under the controlling influences of time and development, the silent opposition of the well-disposed classes of the community will ever prevail. The tyrant who attempts to crush the liberties of his subjects, often defeats his own ends by the imposition of a yoke alike strange and intolerable, which rouses the slumbering energies of the oppressed, and disseminates more widely the spirit of nationality. This was recently proved, when the most colossal Despotism of modern times availed not to wrest from Germany her intellectual vitality.

Having thus rapidly glanced at some of the European nations, I now resume the thread of historic enquiry. With reference to their external phenomena and final results, the important extensions and discoveries that imparted a new stimulus to science and literature strictly appertain to the eighteenth century. But though the complete manifestation of successive stages of development was delayed until the eighteenth century, the seeds were undoubtedly sown in the sixteenth, at the time of the Reformation. In the case of

both the distinct parties into which Christendom was then divided, the means, object, and limits of that improved culture to which the Reformation was eminently accessory, were defined with the nicest precision. Considered in itself this contest was altogether out of the sphere of civilization and literature; it connected itself with politics as far as it was concerned with the constitution of the Church, the nature, limits, and mode of exercising spiritual power, or had for it objects those mysteries of Religion which for the most part are unapproachable by Philosophy.*

As may readily be supposed, however, the Reformation, which wrought such great changes, was not without varied indirect influences, partly salutary and partly noxious, on civilization, science, and literature. Of the former kind, was the increased study of the Greek and other languages of antiquity, which was held indispensable for Religion itself; a study that was henceforth materially extended and generally diffused throughout all Protestant countries, such as Holland, England, and some parts of Germany. In Italy and considerable portions of Germany, this cannot be ranked as one of the resulting benefits, for in them the ancient classics were subjects of favourite pursuit long prior to the Reformation. The rival zeal that animated the champions of both parties could not effect much towards settling the disputed claims that roused so fierce an animosity: most of them being of a nature not to be accommodated by means of contention or discussion. Religion is a matter of feeling and faith, rather than of dispute and dialectics. Yet the strife that raged was, upon the whole, favourable to the interests of historical investigation. The advantage thus accruing was of course indirect rather than immediate, and like the beneficial results of the Reformation, it did not become clearly

* The spirit of these remarks is not antagonistic to Schlegel's observations in his "Lectures on Modern History," where he says:—"From the earliest times, from her very origin, Christianity was intimately allied by some of her very first teachers with philosophy—a certain proof that this alliance was not accidental but essential to Christianity. Her primitive apologists completed the victory over the belief and the principles of heathenism, chiefly by the superiority of Christian philosophy over the stoic-platonic." In the same Lecture he states:—"Whenever true philosophy is neglected, a false one will inevitably take its place."—*Translator's note.*

apparent till after outward tranquillity had been restored, whilst most of the injurious consequences were manifested in some respects at once. The effect on the fine arts was pernicious, not only by the destruction of existing specimens of architecture and painting, but because Art itself was diverted from its original and natural destination. The disturbances and civil wars that ensued were, as usual, more detrimental to the Arts than to literature. Probably Germany lost by these disorders the full development of a style of painting peculiar to it, which began to flourish so gloriously under Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Kranach, and Holbein. These distinguished masters of German pictorial art were all trained in a preceding period, and in their art were found no followers. In the Protestant Netherlands, the artist was content to choose a meaner theme, which the most masterly treatment could not possibly elevate to such dignity as the older paintings on religious subjects. We may affirm that in general a great and injurious interruption in the arts and literature took place, because the attack on the faith and constitution of the Church caused an indiscriminate rejection of everything mediæval—history, art, and poetry in one revolutionary overthrow. Germany, in an especial manner, sustained irreparable losses. The throwing away of an intellectual inheritance, bequeathed by a noble ancestry, is, indeed, all but inseparable from great and sudden changes. But now that we can afford to look back on these times with unbiassed feelings, sober reason and dispassionate judgment, let us cease to misapprehend the mediæval period, its arts and its civilization. It has been asserted that the Reformation first vindicated the real moral freedom of mankind: to this proposition I cannot unreservedly subscribe. The general freedom, or rather lawlessness of spirit, so characteristic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, does not belong to the immediate consequences of the Reformation: various circumstances co-operated in its production; and after all, it may be seriously asked if such degenerate license was not in a degree rather injurious than praiseworthy and salutary? The immediate action of the Reformation on the systems of philosophy and thought was rather restrictive. The very conceptions of a liberality that was characteristic of Italy and Germany in the reign of the Medici, Leo X.,

and the Emperor Maximilian, were unknown in the first half of the seventeenth century. A political and spiritual despotism, such as that of Henry VIII.* at the first outbreak of the storm; and then, after the rending of Europe, of Philip II. in the Catholic countries, and of Cromwell on the Protestant side in a state of revolutionary democracy, would have been impossible but for the Reformation. He who stands at the head of a new party and a great revolution, at once political and religious, possesses so unlimited a power, even over thought and mind, that it depends simply on his own will, if he does not abuse it. It cannot be denied that the adherents of the old faith, under Philip II., and in the reign of several French monarchs, seemed to consider every expedient lawful to check the spread of the new doctrine. Should any one quote instances of persecution in the times preceding the Reformation, in order to prove its beneficial operation, we shall find that in the case of several of these persecutions, as in that of Huss, in the fifteenth century, on nearer inspection of the enormities it will be found that they were in part the effect of political animosity. Besides, long after the period of the Reformation, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, similar atrocities, to the disgrace of mankind, were perpetrated on both sides.

The earliest independent thinker and noted writer in the Protestant ranks, when the first ferment had subsided—Hugo Grotius—could not escape persecution and imprisonment, in the freest country then existing. On the other hand, the manifold abuses to which liberty was subjected, necessarily led to limitations that occasionally became harsh and oppressive. Hence, the nascent development of Italian philosophy, in the fifteenth century, was rudely nipped in the bud, a circumstance that has induced an erroneous impression to prevail relative to the natural ability and philosophic genius of that intelligent people. Their efforts in later times were

* The latest and ablest champion of Henry VIII. (Froude's "History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the death of Elizabeth,") vindicates the policy of that monarch, and substantially proves him to have been magnanimous and patriotic. Mr. Froude has cast much new light on the subject from his researches in generally inaccessible sources, such as state-records, &c., furnished by Sir F. Palgrave. Cromwell's character may safely be left in the hands of Thomas Carlyle.—*Transl. note.*

not calculated to dispel the illusion; for the philosophic talents, so abundantly manifested in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were unfortunately arrayed in opposition to the Church, or shocked the common morality of mankind. In the realms of intellect, as in the domains of politics, anarchy engenders despotism, and despotism, when it has reached the culminating point, gives place to still more violent reactions, immoderate and endless. There is, then, a continual oscillation between the two extremes, despotism and anarchy, both equally hideous and repulsive: unless a third power interposes, stems the angry tide of frenzy, and exercises benevolent and soothing mediation.

We have seen that Protestantism was never actually in direct contact with art or poetry, but that wherever it influenced these, its agency was destructive. On history and on philology it exercised a highly beneficial influence: with philosophy its relations were of the most intimate nature. It will now be convenient to take a rapid survey of the history and condition of philosophy, both before the Reformation, and during the first hundred years that followed that great event: but only in so far as philosophy was essentially connected with the civilization of the human race.

The distinguished reasoners who flourished in England, Italy, and France, prior to the twelfth century, have already been enumerated. Germany took a decided lead in the production of such intellects: almost in unbroken series from Charlemagne to the Reformation, and even after it. Upon the whole, mental sluggishness is not one of the charges that can justly be brought against the Europe of the middle ages. If any objection be raised, it is this, that, together with good and useful matter, much that was useless and positively pernicious was accepted by the restless activity of curious enquiry. The Arabs introduced the mathematics, as well as improvements in chemistry and medicine: but this valuable information was alloyed by monstrosities, misnamed systems, of astrology and alchemy. The philosophy of Aristotle, who was generally considered as the highest standard, the quintessence of natural thought and science, was accompanied by a whole host of subtile dialectics, a chaotic mass of sophistry, such as the Greeks, more especially, were wont

to harbour. The best thing in the Philosophy of Aristotle is the spirit of Criticism: but, in order to apprehend this spirit, a comprehensive and, at the same time, minute acquaintance with the entire genius of antiquity is absolutely essential. Such an acquaintance was hardly compatible with the circumstances of that time: it is even now very uncommon. This spirit of criticism does not forsake Aristotle until he arrives at the awful threshold of metaphysics: and here, the two guides—Reason and Experience—in whom he had hitherto implicitly trusted, are totally inadequate. From a blind attachment to those unintelligible metaphysics which were in the works of the master himself, resulted the so-called scholastic system. The evil was, in some measure, compensated for by an increased study of Aristotle's practical physics, more particularly subsequent to the time of Albertus Magnus. To say that the middle ages were much benefited by the moral philosophy of the Stagyrite, I would not assert: its principal advantage to ourselves consists in the elucidation of Greek manners, social economy, and political constitution which it affords. Europe had, for some centuries, been in possession of a Christian morality purer and much loftier; so that the additions made were chiefly superfluous distinctions and false assumptions. A striking example of the noxious effects of Aristotelian morals, in their practical application, is exhibited in a highly civilized and learned age. I allude to Spain in the sixteenth century. When the treatment of the Americans was discussed in public, Sepulveda, a man naturally upright and honourable, but a fond disciple of Aristotle, stoutly advocated the legitimacy of slavery: an institution no less opposed to the principles of Christianity than it is repulsive to the best feelings of Humanity.

It must not be supposed that the great Doctors of Aristotelian philosophy in the middle ages were the first to propagate this system. The Church had early offered the most strenuous opposition to its dissemination. From the first, many perilous and erroneous doctrines were associated with it. Its tenets, when deeply rooted, led to the substitution of a general soul of the world for a Deity, and to a denial of the personal immortality of the soul—not necessarily, perhaps, yet it did so, among the Arabs, in the middle

ages, and in the sixteenth century. But when the pressure of the times was irresistible, when it was no longer competent for the age to make head against Aristotle's system, it was adopted by certain Christian philosophers, for the purpose of breaking the fury of the tide, and directing its stream into less dangerous channels. On the merits of these distinguished guardians of the faith, a decision may be arrived at as follows:—the false or scholastic elements of their philosophy are derived from the traditionary sophistry of paganism, from the original defects of the Aristotelian system, from the vices of Arabian commentators, and from the vehement sectarianism of the age. This last has, in all time, proved so virulent in its infectious properties as to taint the very persons who attack it. The universities especially contributed to foment the strife: from them generous youth issued in thousands, inflamed with the most furious party-zeal. The good effected by the more excellent of mediæval philosophers is attributable in part to Christianity, which saved them from many grave errors; in part, to their own genius and sound understanding. But this scholastic system, as it has been called, this erratic effort of the mind to grasp the shadows of vain formulas, is by no means exclusively characteristic of the middle ages. It was a frequent symptom of Grecian philosophy, and reached the greatest height during the most flourishing age of its culture. Modern times stand charged with it: nor Germany alone. France and England afford numerous examples, occasionally emanating from the bitterest antagonists of Aristotle and scholastic science: that is, provided we look at the essence of the evil, and are not disposed to underrate the dangers of sophistry, simply because it may assume greater elegance and pliancy of form.

The perplexed roving of the mind in empty conceits and lifeless abstractions as soon as we desert the path of truth, is the peculiar and hereditary malady of Reason. Wayward in its career, it sometimes operates on life in the more dangerous form of loquacious verbosity, or is confined within the restricted formulas of the schools. It is, in both cases, in close union with a spirit of sectarianism at variance with truth.

Mediæval philosophy, generally, is liable to the accusation

of not being permeated in all its parts by the vivifying spirit of Christianity. In the two chief forms of the European system of Philosophy derived from the ancients—I refer to the Platonic and the Aristotelian—were the germs of two distinct errors: the one, at which I have just been glancing, is the subtle refining process, in connection with the dialectics of antiquity and of Aristotle: the other, Platonism, is in itself more sublime and pure, but nevertheless not exempt from fanciful extravagance, as soon as it is freed from those wholesome restraints with which mere humanity can never entirely dispense. This is illustrated by countless examples, derived from the second species of mediæval philosophy, the so-called mystical. As long as they were animated by religious feeling only, and with gentle piety strove after perfection according to the precepts and example of the Gospel, the Mystics rested on the firm ground of Christian truth: thus, they conferred innumerable benefits, not on their contemporaries alone, but on the Church generally throughout all time, like our Thomas a Kempis. This method was indisputably right in opposition to Scholasticism. Yet, despite inward piety of sentiment and feeling, the religious Mystics of the middle ages not unfrequently had a perceptible tinge of pantheistic negation and self-annihilation alien to the spirit of Christianity, and a bar to its loftier development. Did they desire to roam through the spacious realms of science, religious feeling was, of itself, deemed insufficient: other sources of perception, not always of the purest, were laid under contribution, more particularly for an examination of nature's secrets. Platonism, connected as it was with many oriental traditions and mysteries, allowed too free a scope to the imagination: with investigations of natural philosophy, a belief in astrology and an inclination to magic arts were too often blended. This was especially the case in Germany: a circumstance deriving additional weight from the fact that kindred impostures are just now extremely prevalent in this country. Just as eminent men of old were wont to commence their biography by commending themselves to the Almighty, or by the pious expression of some wish or thought, so it is now the fashion to prefix a scheme of nativity, or some astrological calculation.* Such

* Imposture of the kind here alluded to cannot be too strongly repro-

phenomena which are regarded as wonderful and mysterious, not as if in themselves they were quite lawless, unconnected and inconceivable, but because they certainly belong to a higher and hidden order and region, I am very far from wishing to deny, when profound men of science make them the objects of their examination. But even when thus investigated and found to be to a certain extent real, in order to avoid perilous conclusions, sidereal influences should at all times be subjected and reconciled to the spirit of Christianity, which alone is able to interpret and direct aright these hidden powers. If, however, human liberty be *unreservedly* committed to astral control, a belief in astrology is calculated to sap the very foundations of morals and religion, as our own Schiller has shewn in his admirable dramatic delineation of Wallenstein.* These subjects have ever been treated as mysterious secrets, in consequence of the facility of their abuse, and the peril attendant on their communication. It is perfectly consistent with historical probability to suppose that Albertus Magnus, Nicolas of Cusa, the great mathematician of the fifteenth century, worthy Bishop Trithemius, and Reuchlin, the most illustrious oriental scholar of his age, were in possession of much knowledge not commonly diffused at the present moment. Neither would it be altogether just to ignore the genius or the integrity of these scholars merely because they were mixed up with fallacies such as menace the reputation of our own times. Others unfortunately did not retain the original purity of their intellects on coming in contact with some of the splendid but specious dogmas of the age: Agrippa and Paracelsus may be quoted as being by no means free from blemish. At an earlier period, however, Germany could boast of many mystic philosophers imbued with pure religious feelings: no modern language was adapted or applied to the pursuit of the higher branches of philosophy equally soon

bated. It lays the axe at the root of all progressive civilization, not to say religion, and pioneers the way to credulity and crime.—*Transl. note.*

* Allusion is here made to Wallenstein, the brave Duke of Friedland, and the hero of Schiller's finest tragedy. Having thrown off his allegiance to the Emperor of Austria, he was declared guilty of high treason, and assassinated in his own quarters by emissaries sent for that purpose. Previous to undertaking anything of importance, he invariably consulted Seni, an astrologer constantly in attendance upon him.—*Transl. note.*

with the German. A vast number of writers in this department, both in low and high German, continued to flourish from the thirteenth century until the Reformation: they founded a sort of school among themselves, and were styled disciples of secret wisdom, or of the heavenly Sophia, by which term they understood divine truth, alike the object of their contemplation and to which they devoted their life. Of a whole host of names I will here cite but one, of great importance in a history of the language, Tauler, the preacher or philosopher, revered long after the Reformation by the joint homage of Protestants and Catholics, until his memory, too, sunk into oblivion. Alsatian scholars, though in political unison with France, have been reluctant to sever themselves from the literary associations of their native country, and by their earnest researches in German philology and antiquities, have shewn that they were true Germans. They have been among the first, in modern times, to recal attention to this forgotten thinker, and to the value of his works, especially in point of language. His diction, when compared with that prevalent in Luther's age, or even a century later, suggests a difference as striking—if poetry and prose may be compared—as the difference obtaining between the harmonious melody of chivalric poetry in the thirteenth century, such as the Nibelungenlied, and the doggrel rhyme of the sixteenth century. The prose of Tauler contrasts favourably with that of later times, because he was pure in spirit and single-minded in his aim.

If, then, the charge of mysticism is sometimes brought against the Germans of the present day, this fault is far more ancient than those who reproach us with it are aware, for it may be traced to the twelfth century, or even the reign of Charlemagne. So far, however, from being a fit subject of reproach, this tendency is one of the characteristic peculiarities of the intellect and soul of a country, which, without prejudice to the rest, asserts the third rank among the metaphysical nations of history. In India, Greece, and Germany, metaphysical genius, or the science of divine things, cultivated and applied in all its varied associations of height and depth, of ways and byeways, was native and indigenous, not of exotic growth.

National character, in its manifold phases, for the most

part coloured the philosophy of the middle ages, as it does that of more recent times. England and France, then as now, produced clever independent thinkers, as also bold sceptics and keen-witted sophists. Many of the so-called scholastics, natives of France and England, bore a national impress exceedingly well-defined for that age. The Italians of former times were distinguished by unwavering devotion to the doctrines of the true faith: as also, but in inferior degree, by a fondness for the higher and often fanciful regions of philosophy. The tendency to Platonism is apparent in their poets. From the sketch I have just made, it may, accordingly, be inferred that the Aristotelian mode of thought and investigation predominated in England and France, during mediæval as well as modern times. Hence the two countries harmonized in their views and sentiments more than would appear to the superficial observer, notwithstanding political differences. A certain leaning to Platonism, and habits of thought akin to that system, were characteristic alike of the artistic Italian genius and of the reflective, sensitive German: hence, with all the difference of national descent, of language and of customs, a certain sympathy and mutual inclination between the two nations is undeniable.

LECTURE XI.

General Remarks on Philosophy previous and subsequent to the Reformation.—Poetry of Catholic Countries — Spain, Portugal, Italy.—Garcilaso, Ercilla, Camoens, Tasso, Guarini, Marino, Cervantes.

The general condition of civilization and the progress of philosophy shortly before the Reformation, and during the first century after it, formed the subjects of our recent enquiry. I would now proceed to give the essential results of this enquiry in the following observations.

Previous to the Reformation and the revival of classical

literature, a system of verbal subtleties, called the Aristotelian logic, predominated throughout Europe: it was accepted by the learned, and enunciated from academic chairs. The fifteenth century inaugurated a nobler philosophy, at least in Germany and Italy; when meaningless abstractions yielded to living truths, moulded partly in Platonic, partly in Oriental forms. Though faulty and imperfect in individual expressions, yet, in the aggregate, this new system pointed in the right direction, and was intrinsically richer and more profound than that which it had supplanted. Its superiority was manifested in the very manner of its conveyance and in the character of its promoters. It was not expounded in the universities and schools; it was not narrowed down into sectarian views: it was a genuine philosophy, in the old sense of the word, a love of truth and of wisdom, honourably courted and zealously diffused, for its own sake, by men who felt an inward and irresistible call to propagate the glorious knowledge of the Truth; so powerful were the attractions, so endearing the graces of this philosophy, that the greatest mathematicians, the most accomplished classical scholars, the first orientalists, of the fifteenth century, in Italy as well as Germany, were enrolled among her followers. The only effect that a renewed acquaintance with Greek literature had on philosophy, as a whole, was to contribute auxiliary support, in the shape of legendary lore, to the already enthusiastic fancy of oriental mystic Platonism. In other words, the restoration of ancient literary memorials enriched the learning of the age, whilst it also assisted in diffusing fanciful chimerical ideas, and thus co-operated for evil as well as for good.

Aristotelian philosophy was influenced in a far greater degree. It had hitherto never been comprehended or taught in its distinctive features. Its own peculiar guardians, the Scholastics, had intermingled platonic conceptions, in making it subservient to Christian doctrine. On now being drawn fresh from the well-springs of its source, and viewed in connexion with the whole extent and bearings of Grecian genius, it was a material gainer in point of form at least: it was divested of the outer scholastic garb that never really fitted it, and arrayed in classic drapery not unworthy of the acute genius of its author. The more, however, this Greek

philosophy became the subject of earnest pursuit and indefatigable research, the more frequent were the instances of aberration on the part of its adherents: some of them, eventually, arrived at results directly at variance with religion and morality, such as acknowledging an all-pervading spirit of matter and of the universe as a great first Cause, in place of the Almighty, and denying the immortality of the soul. This happened in the case of several disciples of Aristotle, chiefly in Italy, in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The efforts made at this period by some admirers of ancient literature to revive other systems of antiquity, such as the Stoic, had less influence on the course of Philosophy, at least not so palpably. Plato and Aristotle have so clearly defined the two principal modes of human thought and perception, that they have remained and must remain such for all succeeding generations. All other tenets of antiquity are valuable only in consequence of their relation to these two leading systems, from which they are, generally speaking, mere deviations or bye-paths, which again bring back to the main road. Hence the various attempts that were made to re-establish Stoicism, or indeed any other pagan teaching, were futile, and only served to augment the prevalent confusion. To the eternal disgrace of the seventeenth century, be it recorded, that the vilest of all ancient doctrines, the crude materialism of Epicurus, which resolves every thing into primary corporeal atoms, found favour for a time: a circumstance of itself amply sufficient to attest the degeneracy of genuine philosophy, the decline of pure science. Subsequently, this antiquated atom theory, rendered somewhat more important by modern discoveries in physics, attracted a large number of followers, until it grew to be the dominant philosophy of the latter half of the eighteenth century, especially in France, but also over the rest of Europe, owing to the prevalence of the French language.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are not unfrequently regarded as the epoch of a revival or even regeneration of science. In reference to a renewed acquaintance with Grecian literature and antiquities generally, there was a great accession to historical knowledge: and, though it would not be correct to say that complete perfection was attained, yet

considerable progress was effected. However gratifying the advances that were made in the field of information, there is no ground for alleging that a regeneration of the mental faculties really took place: to deserve this appellation, whatever agency was at work should have been from *within*—a raising, as it were, of the dead spirit, a sensible quickening to vitality. Such effects as these were not directly realized: the two principal philosophic methods, the Aristotelian and the Platonic, retained their ascendancy. Yet on the future development of both these schools the Reformation exercised no small amount of influence. Luther himself seems not to have been familiar with the import of that platonic oriental system which had enlisted so numerous a host of followers under her banners, both before and at his time, throughout Germany. On the other hand, he was inflamed with implacable hatred and abhorrence of the scholastics and their reputed founder, Aristotle, whom he was accustomed to call a "dead heathen." Again, Luther's dearest friend and follower, Melancthon, was one of their staunchest adherents: nay more, it was he who once more reinstated Aristotle and the scholastic school, refined and purged of many of their more glaring errors, in their former ascendancy. The case was as follows:—The central point of Truth being once withdrawn or unsettled in the nobler and loftier Platonic philosophy, the door was opened to extravagance of every kind and degree; and such, unhappily, were its frequent manifestations during the early period of the Reformation, when anarchy and wildest confusion raged throughout Germany. Universal suspicion of its principles naturally followed. Spain as well as Germany accepted Aristotelian tenets; inasmuch as this ancient system of forms was the more readily applied by both of the contending parties to their particular creeds, that it was altogether destitute of any vitality of its own. Although now enriched by great additions of natural science, linguistic lore, and antiquities, its main fault was not diminished: there was the same idle dispute about words, and though a better philosophy was on the point of banishing it in the fifteenth century, it maintained itself in all the countries where literature and science were cultivated to the end of the seventeenth century. In Italy the nobler system, that now assumed

the character of a violent and uncompromising opposition, was repressed by the most violent measures, and several men of eminent talent, like Giordano Bruno, were sacrificed as victims to the strife. In Germany and England the higher philosophy, though not entirely suppressed, was yet subjected to persecution, and, by common consent, banished from the sphere of the learned. But with so much greater care was it fostered by secret traditions or associations, or cultivated by persons in the lower ranks of society. In both these ways it was exposed to manifold corruptions and misrepresentations, and kept back from general development and influence.

The endowments of nature are, happily, not meted out with a niggardly or partial hand: the light of divine Revelation is open to every christian and susceptible mind who is favoured with it: the spirit of deep reflection and of the highest science is not confined to the educated classes, and is altogether independent of learning. Many of the most notable philosophers of ancient Greece were of humble origin, having no further mark of distinction than earnest thought: Socrates, the greatest of Grecian sages, was no scholar, neither would he become one. The first teachers of Christianity were men of the people; yet we see them entrusted with the most awful mysteries of human contemplation. From time to time similar individuals have not been wanting. There is often extraordinary moral and spiritual power in the strong and undistracted minds of the common people. The page of history abounds with examples of men in the lower walks of life who have founded sects and remodelled states: the salvation of their country and the spread and revival of true Religion have often proceeded from such men when called to it, and animated by a pure enthusiasm, of which the history of the Catholic church furnishes many examples. This was, of course, for the most part, effected by means of deeds, not writings. If we turn to the spirit of invention and flow of language, and compare philosophy with poetry, we shall find that genius is far from being the exclusive prerogative of the educated. If Shakspere, who entirely attached himself to the poetry of the people, could attain to a height and depth of dramatic representation which completely throws into the shade the most

elaborate efforts of educated and artistic bards: the success in Germany of a man of the people who could measure all the heights and depths of the most metaphysical thinking and of the higher philosophy is quite intelligible; I allude to him whose very name is a stumbling-block to the enlightened, and to the learned foolishness: Jacob Boehme, the Teutonic philosopher. In Germany, in Holland, and in England, he had a host of admiring followers: of which number King Charles of England, of unhappy memory, was not the least ardent.

I have on a previous occasion expressed my conviction that the very presence of a body of popular poetry, in its strictest meaning, is an unerring indication of the decline and decay of real poetry: for that noble art should belong to no peculiar section, should be in the interests of no one party, but be common to all classes of the community, the illiterate equally with the educated. But if this be sufficiently evident in the case of poetry, how much more true is it not of popular philosophy, which, almost in its very terms, involves a contradiction? How fortunately soever individuals may escape the noxious consequences of so abnormal a condition, it cannot but tend to the ultimate decay of philosophy. This is not the place to describe and explain the remarkable system originated by this Teutonic philosopher. For the present, it will suffice to remark that he is characterized by a peculiarly gentle and Christian meekness, to a degree not to be found among contemporary Divines. The manifold and inner phases of the soul form the basis of his meditations: higher aspirations early led him beyond the limits of the ordinary Protestant faith and teaching, and directed his spiritual gaze to dwell upon the dawn of a brighter future, a new era and an universal glorification He sought to manifest the excellence of Divine Revelation, as patent in the wonders of creation, more especially by means of seven secret natural sources and their concealed agency: whilst he himself would seem to have been endowed with a peculiar intuitive vision of these hidden depths and sources. There is no great difficulty in discovering that the system of Jacob Boehme, though impressed with the stamp of original inventive genius, is somewhat imbued with the prevalent forms of mystic philosophy which were then

gaining ground more and more. Neither ought it to be a matter of great surprise to find the unquenchable thirst after Truth led him into other paths far away from the verbal subtleties of the learned. When the visible and invisible bond of the Church was once broken, in some lands another kind was here and there adopted in its stead. There are gradations in the recognition of the truth, inferior and superior degrees: nor can it be expected that the latter should be very common in the present militant state of man. I agree with Lessing, who records it as his deliberate opinion, that among the component parts of human knowledge there are some of so secret a nature that whoever has seized them cannot find resolution to communicate them publicly: either the proper time or the means are wanting. The existence of traditions such as these is historically evident in all ages; and it would be difficult, if not impossible, effectually to obstruct their transmission secretly from generation to generation. But even if traditions of this nature were admitted, on all sides, to consist of pure unmixed truths, yet the very opposition of secret to open and public truth were of itself highly objectionable, and not to be countenanced. If there were an invisible Church in direct antithesis to the visible, the internal conflict, and disruption would resemble a separation of soul and body, and threaten us with a general dissolution. Matters are not yet come to such a pass: the soul and body of man are still in harmonious unison, and Truth is *one*. Whosoever has quitted the rock on which her foundations rest will not be able to build up her temple. The wonders of nature and the secrets of science and of the world of spirits are isolated rays of the Divine light, as it has shone in the Church of God from the beginning, and will continue to shine unto the end of time. The dogmas of the schools and the teaching of science, with their exoteric or esoteric propagation and connexion, must in most eyes be distinct and apart from religion and the Church, in outward constitution as well as in living application. In the inner depths of the spirit, however, they must eternally be *one*, for the Word of Life, which it is the business of both to publish and expound, by diverging routes, is universally the same and emphatically *one*.

Such, then, were some of the effects of the Reformation

on philosophy. We have seen how the intellectual oriental platonic mode of philosophising, reared with admirable skill by the leading minds of Italy and Germany during the fifteenth century, was suppressed after the Reformation, during the sixteenth and seventeenth abandoned to the people and a few self-taught men, or, at the best, propagated in secret, after being greatly corrupted and disfigured. Whilst openly, amongst the learned, the old logical word-system, called Aristotelian, maintained its authority for almost two hundred years till towards the middle and end of the seventeenth century, when other systems and sects supplanted it, whose merits I shall investigate in the sequel, since their influence has extended to our own times, and their complete development belongs to the eighteenth century.

The effects of the Reformation on mental culture and science must, therefore, be estimated according to a correct historical judgment, and not with that indiscriminate applause bestowed upon them by narrow-minded partisans. Especially must a great epoch of this kind be judged of, not according to its effects and consequences, but by its internal essence. If the essence of that epoch be for the most part represented as an awakening of the Intellect—and the mediæval period as that in which the Imagination predominated—this view is on the whole correct; but there are several considerations which must not be lost sight of, if we would avoid drawing erroneous conclusions. In every age of the world one or other of the elementary powers of the human mind has taken the lead, has been peculiarly active, has given a particular direction to the course of events, and impressed its own peculiar character. Thus it was in the third age of the World, which includes twelve centuries from Constantine to the Reformation, and which we have been wont to call the transition-period from the Old World to the New, or the Middle Ages: the predominant element was the Imagination—not that of ancient Paganism, but a new, Christian, transformed, and enlightened Imagination—and hence from this new spring, from the Christian regeneration of this one elementary power of Man, resulted the most peculiar phenomena of that period. In saying this we do not mean that the other powers—the Intellect or the Will—did not strikingly manifest themselves in many great

events and productions at that time, only there was a preponderance of the preceding element, the relation of which to the other elements can be easily discovered in the details of its development and progress through all the successive periods of that age. Nor can the dialectic subtleties of the Schoolmen form a valid objection against the predominance of Imagination in the Middle-Age: but on the contrary, when an elementary power predominates on the whole in any age, the contrary forces are concentrated so much the more in a few individuals, and are prone to shape and develop themselves in glaring contrast and extreme one-sidedness. Thus, in our age of Reason, Poetry and artistic Imagination stand out in isolated separation, as formerly on the contrary side Scholasticism; and so, generally, the mental development of every age brings with it its peculiar defects and dross. But if the fourth age of the world, which commenced at the beginning of the sixteenth century as the turning-point, is correctly designated the Age of Reason, must it necessarily have been exactly such an awakening of it? Must it be a relapse into Pagan reason, instead of a higher illumination of Christian thinking and knowledge in suitable development and regular progress? For that purpose it was as unnecessary as it was criminal, first to break up the Faith; then for three hundred years to place Faith and Science in a state of perpetual collision, by which the former was corrupted, spoiled and laid waste, and the latter separated from it, and by this hostile separation inwardly checked, and become weakened in its vital action. As little was it necessary to throw away at once every sacred memorial and all the ornament of life with which a child-like pious Imagination had carefully decked it, in order that the Reason of the new Period might accomplish its destiny. Grant that the Middle-Age of dawning Imagination gave birth to its peculiar errors; yet, though only comparable to a star of night, it did not so entirely miss the right way as the clear daylight of Reason, during the whole first half of its course, after it had once departed from God. But the evil does not lie in the character of Reason belonging to modern times, since this, like every other elementary power in the cycle of mental development, when its time comes, must take the lead, to fulfil its appointed function in the

World's history; but the evil lies in the bad use which Man, as a free being, makes of the newly-awakened power, since he employs it not in loving harmony for the progressive glorification of Christianity, as the invaluable pledge of divine Tradition and Revelation, but has applied it almost entirely in a spirit of division and separation, till at last, in our day, the remedy has proceeded from the very excess of the evil.

Just as the nations of Europe, since the epoch of discord, have separated more and more from each other, so also between the different sciences and studies a manifold, disgraceful separation has taken place. Especially has this been injurious to the study of Antiquity, and prevented its bringing forth any good fruits, or influencing life. The first founders of this revived study were Philosophers and men who had as vivid a knowledge of the Middle Ages as of Antiquity, and who combined Oriental learning with Grecian. Hence every thing appeared to them in general in its right place, in the great scheme of the World's history, and in living power. But after the separation had commenced, when Philosophy was displaced, suppressed, and banished, and the Middle Ages forgotten, the attention of learned men, who were scarcely at home in their own world and among their own people, was wholly confined to the antiquities of the Greeks and Romans, whom they admired without properly comprehending their beauty, which was only appreciated with some zest by the poets and artists. As classical learning was scarcely ever united to philosophy, a stupid, superstitious regard for words sprung up among scholars, which not till the eighteenth century gave way to a more intelligent study of the Ancients.

Even for Art and Poetry, it must be regarded as injurious, that they scarcely ever came in contact with Philosophy, that the culture of the Imagination was more or less separated from the culture of the Reason, and that the latter often assumed a hostile attitude against the former. Yet amidst the fluctuations and commotions of those stormy times, which were shared by Philosophy and History, almost the only free asylum was afforded by Poetry and Art, where genius and sentiment could develop themselves undisturbed in all their beauty.

The poetry of Catholic countries, such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, having in the age now before us a kindred character and an obvious affinity, it will be convenient to consider them together. The Spaniards were early in possession of their national poem of the Cid, whilst Troubadour poetry did not reach full maturity until the fifteenth century, a period considerably later than that of any other nation. Upon the whole, the spirit of chivalry, with its cognate minstrelsy, retained its hold longer here than in the rest of Europe. The chivalric records of their country, for the most part of an original character, were distinguished, at least the oldest and best known, the Amadis, by polished diction and a predominant fondness for gentle and pastoral delineations. This confirms the remark I made when entering more fully into the details of chivalric and old German poetry, namely, that this soft and tender pathos is singularly peculiar to the heroic nature of warlike nations. Both in Spain and Portugal, chivalry was not long disjoined from pastoral romance. In the fifteenth century, poetry, and more especially the Troubadour poetry, derived material assistance from the compositions of Villena and Santillana, whose birth, rank, and influence, gave them a leading position in the State. It is one of the distinctions of Spanish poesy that from the first it was cultivated more by nobles and knights than by scholars or professed literary men. The term Castilian would be more appropriately affixed to older Spanish song: this province was originally the cradle of the Spanish muse, and diverse portions of the Peninsula had their own verse, a totally distinct and separate species. Catalonia was in possession of a peculiar store of minstrelsy, which, from the character of its idiom, is commonly included in Provençal composition. The last popular lay framed in that dialect was in honour of the heroism and tragic fate of Charles of Viane. This prince was one of the latest favourites of the people, and the senior brother, by a previous marriage, of Ferdinand, surnamed the Catholic, to whose crown Castile was annexed, on which account he was almost regarded as a stranger, and viewed with no great favour in some districts of Arragon. Henceforth Arragon became more and more subordinate in rank: with her political independence its peculiar poetry likewise disappeared. Castile grew to be

the dominant head of confederated states, and in Castilian poetry were all the beauties of poetry united which had been scattered over the various provinces of this poetic country. Portugal alone retained a distinct existence in the domains of language and poetry: yet the memories of that frequent intercourse which had for ages subsisted between Portugal and Castile still survived; many Portuguese composed in the Castile idiom, and much that passes under the name of Castilian is in reality Portuguese. So close is the resemblance which the one bears to the other, that it would be difficult to define the limits of invention on either side with strict accuracy. The Arabians too contributed to enrich and adorn Spanish poetry. The muse of old Castile is, however, quite free from Arabic or oriental admixture. Its language and spirit are rather simple and severe. We can affirm this with greater certainty because the presence of foreign influence in later times is so marked in its distinctive features. Difference of creed and a mutual aversion were sufficiently pointed in earlier ages to prevent amalgamation, or even friendly intercourse, on the part of both. When Isabella and Ferdinand the Catholic (I name Isabella first because she was inflamed with an indomitable desire to liberate her country from foes doubly hateful in her eyes) captured Granada, and emancipated Spain from a yoke that had oppressed it for seven centuries, Arabian dominion in that land was split into two factions, presided over by the respective heads of two illustrious tribes. One of these, the Bencerrajas, subsequently made terms with the Spaniards and embraced Christianity: the other joined the Moors in Africa. Romances are still extant, recording in glowing strains the prowess of the Bencerrajas and their deadly enmity against the Zegris, and the last struggles of the Granadian Arabs; proud songs of love and glory, mutilated heroic fragments of most tender feelings, simple in language, but not without an oriental glow, and in their lyric grace resembling such memories of original Arab songs.* In these

* "The reader," says Mr. Lockhart, in his *Ancient Spanish Ballads*, "cannot need to be reminded of the fatal effects produced by the feuds subsisting between the two great families, or rather races, of the Zegris and the Abencerrages of Granada." See Mr. Lockhart's admirable version of the *Zegri's Bride.—Transl. note.*

romances, more charming, to my fancy, than those in any other living tongue, the Arab spirit and vivid eastern colouring that have so sensibly tinged all succeeding Spanish poetry are not to be mistaken. Thus, the poetic garden of ancient Castile, enriched by Portuguese art, redolent of Provençal fragrance, and decked with the choicest colours of Arabia, bloomed on in exquisite splendour. Under Charles the Fifth, who crowned Ariosto as the first poet of Italy, Garcilaso and Boscan introduced the more artistic poetry of Italy into Spain, without, however, sacrificing the genius of their native language. At first, this innovation was extremely unpalatable to a nation fondly attached to old associations, but in the sequel it had the happiest results. No other poetry is made up of such varied elements, yet it must not by any means be supposed that these elements were heterogeneous or dissonant; they were rather single notes of fancy and feeling, constituting thorough harmony when blended, and imparting to Spanish poetry the highest witchery of the romantic. This poetry is not only rich, but thoroughly one in spirit and tendency, and harmonizes with the national character and feeling. Since the glorious days of Ferdinand the Catholic and Charles the Fifth, no literature has preserved so completely a national character as that of Spain. If literary works be judged by the principles of theoretic art, differences of opinion relative to the merits of this or that individual production, or a whole body of literature, must necessarily be infinite, so that no unprejudiced estimate can be formed, and the first pure impression is lost. A much simpler standard for deciding literary worth exists: one combining lucid exposition with nice precision. It is that moral point of view which refers at once to the adaptation of literature to the national welfare and the national character.

In this respect, every comparison that is instituted must needs result in favour of the Spaniards. Let us take, by way of example, the poetry and literature of Italy, which, if viewed on mere artistic grounds, unquestionably take precedence of many other countries, both as to polish and style: but how inferior in nationality to Spain! Several of the leading poets are altogether destitute of national sympathies or relations, such as Boccacio, Ariosto, Guarini; or, as in

Petrarch, the national lyre awakens only scattered reminiscences, blended with a false patriotism, as in the perverse admiration of Rienzi and the schemes of restoring the ancient republic. Dante and Machiavelli are the two most national writers: but to the former, with his bitter Ghibelline spirit so ill concealed whenever he alludes to the actual world and contemporary events, cannot be conceded the meed of universal or even general appreciation, for his poetico-religious visions are too fanciful to be intelligible to the multitude: whilst the Florentine politician advocates such pagan and destructive principles as to forfeit all claims to national consideration.

How lofty, in this point of view, is Spanish literature and poetry! Every part of them all is imbued with the noblest national feeling, severe, moral, and religious in tone, though the subject under treatment be not directly either morals or religion. Throughout their entire range, there is nothing in the remotest degree calculated to degrade the thinking faculty, to confuse the feelings, to pervert the judgment. Everywhere there is one and the same spirit of honour, of strict morality, and of firm religious belief. Allusion has already been made to the abundance of historical works, and to the manly eloquence so early developed and so long preserved. Her poets, too, approve themselves to be, what they are, genuine Spaniards! It might almost be said that artistic form of expression and of delineation constituted the sole difference of representation: of all, *one* style is eminently characteristic, the Spanish. National worth like this cannot fairly be judged by a standard of antique excellence, or of Italian taste, or the requirements of French refinement. With reference to so glorious a distinction, Spain is entitled to the first rank, England perhaps to the second. Not that the latter at all yields to the former in point of literary wealth or compass, but that her literature contains conflicting anti-national elements, coupled with obvious traces of abnormal development. The national unity of English literature has been preserved in spite of all these difficulties, rather as the result of a tacitly acknowledged law than from its mere feeling and character. Nothing, however, is further from my design than to maintain that this national point of view is the only standard by means of which the intrinsic historical worth of

literature is to be fixed. It will, on the contrary, be my endeavour to illustrate hereafter the important consequences of an internal struggle to French as well as German literature, which, provided it be not connected with petty interests, and made subservient to party purposes, must precede all beneficial changes. It is, as it were, the throes of regeneration, whence proceeds a new era in intellectual life, a purified recognition of the truth.

Garcilaso and some of his contemporary poets, in the reign of Charles the Fifth, are reputed to be the models of refined diction and elevated taste. He was, no doubt, a respectable pattern, if not for direct imitation, yet for reference in later periods, in proportion as some poets have indulged in affectation and monstrosity: but I cannot subscribe to an opinion that Garcilaso and other poets of his time have reached perfection in poetical language, like Virgil among the Romans, or Racine among the French. His poems challenge our regard chiefly as happy effusions of amatory feeling rather than great classical productions. A lyric and idyllic poet may shew this happy condition of language and poetry; but he cannot exhibit them in full perfection, because lyric poems are of too limited a compass and too confined in their import. An epic or dramatic poet alone can hope to be handed down as a permanent authority on questions of national art or diction. Spanish life of that age was still so chivalrous and rich, her European wars were so great and glorious, her adventures on the ocean and in the New World so wondrous and striking to the imagination, as completely to distance, in thrilling interest, the fictions of ancient chivalry. About this time, fantastic and grotesque elements of chivalric poetry were everywhere banished from epic verse: but the Spaniards fell into the opposite extreme of too rigid an adherence to historic details.* This is a marked defect in Ercilla's celebrated epic—the Araucana—in which the wars of the Spaniards with a certain brave and independent American race, are sung or rather narrated. The aspect of the country, and of its fierce inhabitants, the wildernesses and natural phenomena, skirmishes and pitched battles, are all depicted with a truthful-

* See Critique, "North British Review" for May—"Philosophy of History, Niebuhr, and Sir G. C. Lewis."—*Transl. note.*

ness which makes us feel that the poet was evidently an eye and ear-witness. This, the earliest Spanish epic, here and there contains passages of poetic beauty, but, on the whole, the impression produced is that of a metrical narration of travels and campaigns. But epic verse should be composed of these two constituents: historic truth and grandeur as well as the free play of the Imagination in the marvellous; the latter may be fictitious and legendary, or founded on fact. The Cid remains the only great national epic of the Spaniards. Camoens, the Portuguese bard, was more successful than Ercilla in this department of literature. As the wild wastes of America had fallen to the lot of the Spaniards, so richer India, a far happier subject, inspired the poet of Portugal. He, too, affords abundant internal proof of having been a soldier as well as mariner, an adventurer and circumnavigator. He lays great stress on the historical truth, and boasts that he means to beat Ariosto, by means of real incidents that shall surpass the heroic deeds of Ruggiero.* The commencement of this poem is strongly suggestive of Virgil, who then constituted the model of epic verse. But as the bold mariner soon loses sight of the coast, and ventures forth on the open sea, so Camoens is not long in departing from his great exemplar, and with his Gama, sails round the world, through dangers and storms, till he attains his aim and the joyful conquerors tread on the long wished for shore. A fragrance is shed over his poem like the fragrance wafted from India's spicy gales, inviting and welcoming travellers to her shores. A southern glow animates each verse. The diction is simple and the purport serious: but in colouring and genial fancy he surpasses Ariosto, whose garland he aims to bear away. Gama and the discovery of India, are not the only themes which inspire the muse of Portugal: she sings the lordly rule and deeds of prowess of her nation in that land of conquest, and takes occasion to weave into her story all that was chivalrous, great, beautiful or noble in the traditions of his country. The name of Camoens enshrines the collective glories of his country. No bard of ancient or modern times was ever so intensely national: none, since the days of Homer, so honoured and beloved by his countrymen. Soon after his

* One of Ariosto's heroes.— *Transl. note.*

time, the sun of Portuguese splendour set: and the bard is the most valuable memorial bequeathed to us of the historic records and literary treasure of his native land. In the commencement, as at the conclusion, of his great epic, Camoens preeminently shines in the full dignity of a national poet: when he apostrophizes Sebastian, the youthful sovereign of Portugal—whose hapless fate foreshadowed his kingdom's fall—in strains of fond devotion mingled with admonitory exhortation, such as beseemed the aged soldier whose sword had often vindicated his country's honour.

Tasso, who appeared somewhat later on the scene than Camoens, is moreover, nearer to ourselves by his language, and in part by his great Christian theme, which is most felicitously selected, on account of the combination of the chivalrous and marvellous with the sober reality of historic truth. The choice was extremely happy in connection with his own age: the contest between Christianity and the Mahometan powers was raging with unabated fury. Even in the reign of Charles the Fifth, the warriors of Spain entertained sanguine hopes of regaining Godfrey's conquests in the Holy Land, that had lapsed into other hands. The realization of these hopes seemed by no means extravagant at a period when the Spanish flag waved in triumph over the Mediterranean, or so difficult as the idea of checking the Turkish power in Europe. The no less ambitious than devotional bard was animated alike by a patriotic regard for Christianity and by enthusiasm for his art. But he cannot be said to have fully grasped the lofty elevation of his theme, or indeed to have done much more than lightly touch its surface. His genius was likewise cramped by too strict an imitation of the Virgilian form, producing occasional confusion in the machinery of his epic. Yet this same idea of a necessary form for an epic, did not prevent Camoens from interweaving into his poem whatever could adorn a national heroic poem and from doing full justice to his subject. Tasso could not have effected so much, even had he comprehended the construction of epic verse more thoroughly than he did. He is one of those who can more readily express their inner feelings and ideas, than depict the outward world of action and therein merge their own individuality. The finest passages in his poem are just those which would appear equally

beautiful and attractive as episodes in any other, being totally unconnected with the main subject. Tasso enchants his reader by a glowing delineation of Armida's captivating charms, Clorinda's faultless beauty, and Ermina's gentle love. Poetic creations, concerning whom the German bard* puts these words into Tasso's own mouth:—

> "They are not shadows, offspring of delusion,
> I know it—they are eternal, for they are."—*Goethe.*

In Tasso's lyrical poems there is a glow of passion and an inspiration of unfortunate love which delight us even more than the little pastoral *Aminta*, warmed as that is by love's own glow, especially when contrasted with the cold severity of Petrarch's art. Tasso is altogether the poet of the feelings, and just as Ariosto is famous for his picturesque beauty, so Tasso's verse rings with harmonious melody: this, no doubt, has contributed not a little to endear him to his countrymen, and render him their favourite minstrel. The episodes in his epic have often been sung with or without musical accompaniment; the Italians possess no actual romances similar to those of the Spaniards, hence they turn portions of their great epic into ballads, at once the most musical, poetical, and noble of which any people can boast. Perhaps this mode of dividing into fragments their national lay, was best calculated for enjoyment and for feeling; what of connection was thus sacrificed, constituted no great loss. His numerous alterations and failures attest his inadequate comprehension of the structure of epic verse. His first effort resulted in chivalric song: he set about remodelling his *Jerusalem Delivered*, on which his fame was founded, at an age when poetic fire has lost somewhat of its glow; he sacrificed the most beautiful and attractive passages to the severe morality he had adopted, and introduced a frigid allegory. He resolved on the composition of a Christian epic relative to the Creation. It is unnecessary to explain in detail the difficulties that beset the most successful bard in expanding the few and partly mysterious expressions of Moses into as many complete cantos. The poetical treatment of such themes was fully considered on the occasion of our examining Dante's merits, and the sole reason why Tasso's poem is mentioned here is, that this it was which Milton

* The allusion is to Goethe's "*Torquato Tasso*," Act II. sc. 1.—*Transl. note*

had before his eye. In this poem of the Creation, Tasso dispensed with rhyme, to which his other compositions owe so much of their charms, and an instrument over which few bards had greater mastery than himself. So severe were the conditions he imposed upon his genius: but among so many beauties, we ought not to judge him too harshly, when we convict him of occasional conceits. For what will be left of poetry after we have denied it the free play of the imagination? If each thought is so strictly tried and dissected, at last nothing will be left but spiritless prose. Even in prose, we shall find in the purest writers, on a close analysis, here and there, images, which strictly taken, are not correct throughout, and contain something false. Not a few of Tasso's poetic conceits are both pregnant with meaning and artistically beautiful. To a poet of the feelings and of the gentle passion, such a license, if it be a license, is readily conceded. It is found in the love-elegies of the ancients, which are wont to be held up as the Gorgon's head, a terrible image of classic severity, to the roving fancy of romantic minstrels.

If, then, Tasso be regarded as a musical poet of the feelings, his uniformity and thorough sentimentality ought scarcely to be imputed to him as a fault. Uniformity appears to be well nigh inseparable from poetry that is essentially lyric: there is, rather, considerable beauty in the soft elegiac tones which apostrophize those charms that appeal to the senses. The Epic poet, on the other hand, must be more copious and varied. He must embrace a world of circumstances, the spirit of the past and present, of his nation, and of nature. He must be skilled to touch each chord of human passion, his strain must not be monotonous. In this epic richness Camoens is far superior to Tasso: in the grand heroic of the former there are passages whose tender delicacy yields not to Tasso's choicest lines: his lay, though warmed by southern fancy, often breathes a loving plaint of sorrow, whilst the rapturous inspiration of the gentle passion elevates his verse to the dignity of a romantic epic. He blends the picturesque fulness of Ariosto with the musical enchantment of Tasso, and superadds the earnest grandeur of that genuine heroic element which Tasso longed for but never attained.

After what has been said it may seem almost superfluous to add that of those three great epic bards of the moderns —Ariosto, Camoens, Tasso,—the palm of excellence is, in my estimation, due to the second. Yet I freely admit that personal feelings are somewhat concerned in coming to a conclusion on subjects like these. Of the qualities and faculties constituting genuine poetic worth, few only are referable to definite ideas and fixed principles: the greater part are decided by the peculiar bent of individual feelings and views. Tasso's reply to one that asked him who was the greatest of Italian poets, is a case in point. He replied not without emotion, "Ariosto is the second!" The self esteem of poets is easily wounded, and that of their admirers is equally sensitive.

In Tasso Italian verse exhibited the old Roman dignity, without, however, sacrificing any of its natural beauties. After his time, there was an ever-increasing proneness to adopt the antique, not in style and form alone, but also in the choice of subjects. Guarini, like Tasso, an erotic poet, and the last of any note, who flourished in the best days of Italian literature, exhibits greater richness of thought than Tasso, and is likewise more concise as well as elevated in his style. But in the love songs of Tasso the current of feeling is more natural and more powerful. His arcadian drama, *Pastor fido* (the faithful shepherd)* though no elaborate imitation but rather a genuine effusion of his own feelings, is impressed with true classic spirit, and in its noble proportions reminds us of the Grecian drama in its palmy days. Dramatic composition cannot, as a whole, be said to constitute a distinguished feature of older Italian literature: all earlier efforts to revive ancient tragedy were virtually failures, remaining, at the best, unsuccessful and vapid imitations; for this, the excellence attained in a peculiar species of the drama makes ample amends. Foreign nations were charmed with the novelty: no other Italian poet has been so extensively translated, read, and admired. In France, Guarini continued to be looked upon as a high standard of poetic composition, until the appearance of Corneille's *Cid*.

* It may be fairly presumed that this suggested to Allan Ramsay the idea of his exquisite Scottish pastoral drama—"The gentle Shepherd."

Judged by severe dramatic rules, his production was not calculated to open up a novel path, or found a new stage, for its deficiencies when thus viewed were strikingly apparent. The lyric muse of Italy probably never took a bolder flight than in several choruses and other passages of this poem. Attention has also been directed to the play of thought in romantic erotic minstrels, and on the Italian concetti, when speaking of Tasso. The same ground of justification may be allowed to Guarini: only that in him the matter is aggravated by occasional affectation, and is less happily conceived. Passages might be cited not unworthy of the dignified earnestness of a great poet of antiquity, but he stands on the frontiers of elegant refinement and of voluptuous taste which is found most abundantly in Marino. In him everything luxuriant and effeminate, which is to be found in Ovid and the other ancient amatory poets, and all that is playful in Petrarch, Tasso, and Guarini, are blended together in a sea of poetic sweetness which is the more disagreeable to a correct taste because his playfulness appears not to proceed from nature and his own feelings, but to be the result of imitation.

Such was the fate of the earlier Italian muse when she attempted to effect a coalition, in erotic minstrelsy, of ancient mythology and art with the natural transports of the romantic school.

The poetry and literature of Spain long maintained a happy independence and noble bearing in its separated existence. Imitation of antique models could spread abroad neither so extensive nor so pernicious an influence in a country pre-eminently distinguished for vigorous national feeling. Poetry became the willing handmaid of the present: romance achieved an excellence unparalleled in other lands: the stage acquired an almost incalculable store of materials, of a shape and form altogether peculiar.

There is not, in reality, any one period in Spanish poesy that may be regarded and represented as a standard of perfection for all other periods: since, although Garcilaso and some of the earlier bards have by some critics been especially commended for classic grace, the praise so bestowed is due only in a restricted sense. The poetic diction of Spain was ever free. Too much art and poetry may have been lavished upon it, but it has never been subjected to any universal rule,

excepting the prevalent system of metre. A circumstance peculiarly remarkable, inasmuch as Spanish prose was from the earliest times singularly subject to systematic rules. Nice precision became its second nature, so much so that whilst the prose of other countries commonly degenerates into negligent confusion, the greatest danger which threatened that of Spain was a tendency to refining subtlety, a fault which they call Ahudeza. From such over-precision, however, the best writers are thoroughly exempt. Of these, Cervantes is indisputably the first and most perfect, presenting a model of elegant perfection and artistic proportions such as her poetry never knew. And yet the very absence of a similar original in the domains of poetry was extremely favourable to the promotion of animated grace and the unfettered development of inventive fancy.

The admiration of collective Europe for more than two centuries is a just tribute of homage to the surpassing genius of Cervantes. The qualities on which these claims are grounded are matchless perfection of style and representation, combined with brilliant wit and life-like portraiture of Spanish character and manners. Hence, his romance is ever fresh and sparkling, whilst the many imitations it has suggested to second-rate writers, in Spain itself, in France, and England, have either sunk into oblivion, or are on their way to it. The remarks previously advanced on the subject of poetic witticism apply here in full force. The poet who cultivates these regions of literature ought to assert, and establish, his claim to the title by the richest poetic vein, by consummate artistic form, and by an elegant finish. Those are clearly in error who would pick out the pure satire from the romance of Cervantes, and throw aside the poetry. The latter may not be equally gratifying to the taste of foreign nations, but it is thoroughly Spanish. Whosoever chooses to examine more minutely will find that this glorious delineation combines just so much of jocund pleasantry with sober earnest, caustic irony with gentle poetry, as is calculated to give effect to the contrast, and produce agreeable impressions. The remaining prose works of Cervantes, including eclogues, novels and a pilgrim-romance* – his final effort – partake more

* English translations of the novels of Cervantes, and his Persiles and Sigismunda, are published in Bohn's Standard Library.

or less of the charms that distinguish Don Quixote: though this latter is superior in inventive fulness, and appears the more inimitable the more it is imitated. Don Quixote is, in truth, peculiarly Spanish in all its characteristics: it constitutes the pride and boast of Spaniards. Its vivid colouring and faithful yet graphic sketches of national life, manners, and genius, with all its kindred associations, entitle it to be classed with the best productions of the epic muse.

LECTURE XII.

ROMANCE. — DRAMATIC POETRY OF SPAIN. — SPENSER, SHAKSPERE, MILTON. — AGE OF LOUIS XIV. — FRENCH TRAGEDY.

NOTWITHSTANDING its intrinsic excellence, the romance of Cervantes has been a dangerous model for imitation by the rest of Europe. Unique and inimitable of its kind, it has originated the whole modern romance in France, England, and Germany, and has occasioned a vast number of unsuccessful attempts to elevate a prosaic representation of the realities of the present to the dignity of poetry. To say nothing of the original genius of Cervantes, which permitted the expression of much that would not have been desirable in any successor, the peculiar relations and circumstances under which he cultivated prose fiction, so to speak, were immeasurably more advantageous than those of subsequent times. Real life was, in Spain, still tinged with a romantic chivalry that had long been exploded in other countries. The absence of strict municipal organization, and the free or rather lawless life of those who lived in the provinces, were of themselves calculated to favour the conditions of poetry.

In all these attempts to raise the realities of Spanish life by means of the witty and the marvellous, or by the excitement of thought and feeling to a species of poetic fiction, there is an anxiety on the part of the authors to create a

poetic distance, be it the sunny skies of southern Italy or the wilds and forests of America. But, even when the narrative is comprehended within the sphere of native social life, there is still a manifest anxiety, so long as the whole has not resolved itself into mere humour and jest, to escape in some measure from the contracted limits of actual reality, and emerge into the spacious domains of fancy: this is alike applicable to travels, duels, elopements, and to adventures with banditti, or to a company of strolling players.

The romantic element in many of these second-rate romances, even in the less objectionable ones, appears to coincide very closely with a state of morals disposed to set at defiance magisterial authority. I am reminded here of the observation of a celebrated philosopher, who conceived that whenever the economy of municipal arrangements shall be perfected in general police so as to prevent all contraband trading, and so vigilantly detective as to sketch not only the physiognomy but also the biography of every traveller on his passport, romance will become obsolete, from the want of necessary materials. This view, however singular it may appear at first sight, is not without its foundation in truth.

To determine the genial and essential relations of poetry to the present and to the past, is equivalent to an analysis of the constitution of art. With the exception of a few commonplace definitions of taste and beauty, and erroneous opinions on kindred topics, our ordinary theories treat only of the various forms of poetry which, whilst they are necessary branches of knowledge, are by no means of exclusive or indeed of the highest importance. As yet no theory has been broached conveying adequate information respecting the proper materials of poetry, though it will scarcely be denied that this is very important in relation to life. In the present course of lectures I have endeavoured to supply this defect, and to present such a theory whenever an opportunity has presented itself.

It were a false canon of criticism to maintain that the present is necessarily more unfit for poetic delineation simply because it is, intrinsically, of more ordinary and ignoble elements than the past. That which is mean, doubtless strikes us with greater significancy and force when present to our gaze and close at hand: in the background of memory nobler shapes stand out in full relief, and

thus hide much that is insignificant or unsightly. But it is competent for a true poet to overcome difficulties of this nature: it is his very province to shed a refulgence over the ordinary events of daily life, and to invest them with a higher importance, a deeper meaning. It were in vain, however, to gainsay the confining shackles of the present, or ignore the restraint it puts upon the fancy: if this latter be unnecessarily or immoderately restricted, it will indemnify itself by a greater licence in regard to language and description.

To express my views on this point in the shortest and clearest manner, I would repeat my previous remarks in reference to religious and christian subjects of representation. The invisible world, the Deity, and pure spirits, cannot be directly presented to us; nature and human beings are the legitimate and immediate themes of poetry. But that higher and spiritual world may be embodied in our earthly material, and its glories indistinctly shadowed forth. In like manner, indirect representation is most appropriate to the description of present reality. The choicest bloom of young life, and the highest ecstacy of passion, the rich fulness of an enlightened survey of the world, may all be easily transported into the traditionary past, whether longer or shorter, of a nation; they gain there an incomparably wider field, and appear in a purer light. Homer, the oldest poet of the past known to us, also exhibits the present in the liveliest and freshest manner. The true poet embodies his own age, and, in some measure, himself, in his delineation of previous times. The following appears to me to be the correct and true relation of poetry to time. The proper business of poetry seems to be a representation of the eternal, the ever-important, and universally beautiful: but this is impracticable without a veil. A material basis is required; and this is found in her own peculiar sphere, that of legendary or national reminiscences. In her representation of these she transfers the rich treasures of the present—in so far as they admit of poetic treatment—and since she explains the enigma of existence and the intricacies of life as far as they are capable of solution, whilst prefiguring the bright glory of all things in her magic mirror, she reflects the lustre of the future, the dawning streaks of approaching spring. Thus harmoniously blending all times and seasons, the past, the

present, and the future, she proves herself to be the truthful representation of the eternal, or of perfected time. In a strictly philosophic sense the eternal is no nonentity, no mere negation of time, but rather its entire undivided fulness, in which all its elements are not torn asunder, but intimately blended; a condition in which past love blooms anew in the unfading reality of an abiding remembrance, and the life of the present carries in it the germs of future hope and of continually increasing splendour.

Yet, though as a whole the indirect representation of present realities has been held to be most suitable for poetry, it is not intended indiscriminately to censure all intellectual creations moulded on opposite principles. We must distinguish between the artist and his productions. The genuine poet rises superior to the errors of the form he has selected, and displays his greatness even in works that, owing to their original construction, must needs stop short of perfection. Milton and Klopstock command our homage, although it cannot be denied that they imposed upon their powers a task to which they were inadequate.

For the same reasons, Richardson, who sought to lift modern reality to the regions of the poetic in a manner widely differing from the fancy of Cervantes, justly claims the tribute of our admiration for his great talent of description, notwithstanding the partial failure of his high aim owing to the imperfection of his plan.

Spanish fiction displays incomparably greater richness in the drama than in romance. Lyric poetry of the feelings is the fruit of love and enthusiasm, nurtured in retirement: even when quitting the narrow precincts of contiguous objects, it seizes on an age and nation for its topics, it still bears marks of its origin. Heroic poetry, however, implies the existence of a nation, one which either is, or has been: a nation which has recollections, and a great past, rich in legendary lore, with an original poetic mode of thinking, and a mythology. Both lyric and epic poetry are much more the offspring of nature than of art: dramatic verse, on the other hand, is a production of the state, of civil and social life, and accordingly requires some great central arena for its development. Such is the more natural as well as more favourable condition of its success, though at times

there have been lesser circles of its operation challenging, if not surpassing, the original metropolitan seats of dramatic art. Hence, it is easily intelligible how the stage attained to mature excellence and distinction in Madrid, London, and Paris, more than a century before the very formation of a national drama in either Italy or Germany. For though Rome has early been the chief seat of the Church; and Vienna, since the fifteenth century, the metropolis of the German empire, yet both of these were not central points of their respective nations in an equal degree with the three great capitals of the European West.

Just as the Spanish monarchy, until the middle of the seventeenth century, was the most illustrious in Europe, and Spanish nationality had attained the utmost degree of development, so the stage, that holds the mirror up to national manners and usages, early bloomed in richest prodigality at Madrid. The rest of Europe has never been slow to recognize the fulness of invention, though it may not have equally prized the significancy and spirit of the Spanish drama. But if it even possessed no other advantage than that of being thoroughly romantic, this alone would be sufficient to render it remarkable; it would be instructive to see what sort of dramatic invention could proceed from chivalric poetry, as coloured by the fancy peculiar to mediæval and modern Europe. No other nation is competent to furnish so valuable an instance of this process, inasmuch as none remained equally free from all influence and imitation of the antique. Italy and France, in the formation of their theatre, were actuated by the wish of restoring the tragedy as well as comedy of the Greeks in pristine purity, whilst the English drama was itself not uninfluenced by Seneca and the older French plays.

If we estimate the Spanish stage according to its first renowned writer and master, Lope de Vega, its general excellencies will appear only in dim and faint outline, and give us no very exalted idea of its merits, so slight and superficial is the design of his almost countless pieces. The uniformity or at least general similarity which mostly characterizes the pieces of a lyric poet is equally apparent in the works of a dramatic poet, which of course facilitates and tends to multiply his productions. The entire dramatic efforts, not only of one composer, but of a whole period and of a col-

lective people, are not unfrequently grounded on some one leading *Idea*, essentially the same in all, but variously modified and conveyed: like so many variations of one theme, or solutions of the same problem. If, then, this idea be clearly comprehended, and the form most fitting both the idea and the stage be selected, if a thorough mastery over diction and theatrical effect be achieved, the writer may contrive to throw off a large number of artistic productions without any apparent negligence. In this way the great dramatists of antiquity severally produced more than a hundred plays. Nevertheless, the dramatic compositions of Lope exceed the utmost limits of legitimate fertility. The greater part of them must needs have been improvised rather than studiously prepared. Granted that Lope was the most rapid dramatic composer of any age or nation, most poetic in innate genius, of richest invention, most glowing in fancy: qualities, some of which are so common to the poets of his country as scarcely to admit of individual commendation. Yet, in spite of Lope's singular talent and fertile imagination, a succession of dramatic efforts so rapid, is justifiable neither in an artistic nor a moral point of view. Order and strict law are the more indispensable to the stage, because in no other species of composition are negligence and corruption so easily tolerated, and no other is equally calculated mutually to injure the artist and the public. Our own German stage abounds in recent examples of the facility with which the dramatist, if endowed with happy and impassionable genius, like Lope, or even without the aid of his splendid faculties, may transport his age beyond the limits of reason and prudence, and by a dexterous application of his powers blunt the finer sensibilities of his nation. On the other hand, theatrical applause is, of all incense, the most exciting and irresistible in its operation on the vanity of a poet. It is the public that, for the most part, confirms its favourite in his worst faults, and tempts him to surrender himself to them without limit or controul. This tendency to demagogic licence and anarchy, inherent in the drama, did not escape the keen observation of the ancients, who often animadverted upon it, though that art had attained to high perfection in their day.

However much the art of improvising may be recom-

mended for the purposes of popular poetry, or some other sphere, it is totally inapplicable to the drama. The drama must be treated in an artistic manner; even if the execution be rapid and yet successful, the design at least must be contrived with deliberate care. Otherwise, the stage will, at the best, convey only ephemeral impressions of life, with its perplexities and passions: and will reflect the mere glittering surface without a single glance into its hidden depths. On this, the lowest, step of dramatic art, stands Lope, with some of the ordinary dramatists of Spain at his side. They shine, indeed, with poetic brilliancy if we compare their productions with the far deeper degeneracy of the stage among other nations: but they do not in any way satisfy the exigencies of high art. How rarely individuals or nations are disposed to agree upon the precise terms of those exigencies, is abundantly attested by the fact, that so many regard Lope and Calderon as poets of the same order, though they are separated by an almost immeasurable interval. Whoever would apprehend aright the genius of the Spanish stage must study Calderon, the last and greatest of all Spanish poets.

Before his time, Spanish poetry was divided between rudeness on the one hand, and affectation on the other, which not unfrequently met in the same composition. The influence of Lope's pernicious example was not restricted to the drama. Intoxicated by theatrical applause, he shared the vanity of poets who have attempted many distinct kinds of composition, and sought to shine in those for which he had no talent. Not content with the homage rendered him as the prince of living dramatists, he was ambitious of writing romances like Cervantes, and heroic poems like Ariosto and Tasso. Thus his slipshod style and manner were carried beyond the walls of the theatre: whilst Gongora and Quevedo were at the same period in the full exercise of artificiality in sentiment as well as expression. In the midst of corruption such as this Calderon lived, and from these chaotic elements he had to rescue the poetry of his land, to ennoble and purify it in the flames of love, and redirect it to its lofty aim.

This process of Spanish poetry, namely, its transition from the lowest stage of dissolute lawlessness and false refinement, to the summit of genuine art, until it closed in the full bloom of loveliness, is singularly interesting. It

may serve, if properly examined, to correct the erroneous notions which prevail respecting the regular progress and decline of art, with special and instructive reference to the literature and poetry of our own age and nation; when we see how, from the depths of a voluptuous degeneracy and a lifeless affectation, the imagination and poetry of Spain, shining with new splendour, rose with renovated youth like the Phœnix from its ashes.

Previous to describing the genius of the Spanish stage, as manifested in perfect completeness in Calderon, it is necessary to take a cursory glance at the essence of the dramatic art generally, according to my own views of it. In the first and lowest scale of the drama, then, I place those pieces in which we are presented with only the visible surface of life,—mere fleeting sketches of the world's panorama. And though all the keys of tragic passion were sounded from the highest to the lowest, though social refinement were correctly pourtrayed in comedy; yet, so long as the whole is confined to external appearances alone, a mere pleasing perspective for the eye to dwell upon, or an impulsive pathos to thrill the heart, this would still be their inferior position. The second place in the scale of dramatic art is due to effective representations of human passion where the deeper shades and springs of action are pourtrayed: a delineation of characteristics, not individual, but general, of the world and of life, in manifold variety, their inconsistencies and their perplexing intricacies: in a word, a picture of man and his existence, recognized as an enigma and treated as such. Did the aim of dramatic art purely consist of these important significant characteristics, not only would Shakspere be entitled to rank as the first dramatist in the world, but there could scarcely be found a single poet, ancient or modern, worthy for a moment to be compared with him. But I conceive that the stage has yet another and a loftier aim. Instead of merely describing the enigma of existence, it should also *solve* it: extricate life from the tangled confusion of the present, and conduct it through the crisis of development to its final issue. Its penetrating glance thus extends to the realms of futurity, where every hidden thing becomes exposed to view, and the most complicated web is unravelled; raising the mortal veil, it permits us to scan the secrets of an invisible world, reflected from the mirror of

seer's fancy, it shews the soul how the inner life is formed by outward conflict, which results in the decisive victory of the immortal over the mortal. This altogether differs from what is commonly called the catastrophe in a tragedy. Many dramatic works are entirely deficient in this final solution as here indicated, or if they allude to it at all, they do so simply in external form, without the slightest reference to the inner essence or spirit. This reminds me of Dante's three worlds, and the graphic force with which he introduces to our notice a series of living natures; first, the lowest abyss of perdition, then an intermediate state of suffering cheered by hope, till he brings us to the highest elevation of glory. All this may be applied to the drama; a circumstance which would entitle Dante to rank, in a certain sense, as a dramatic poet, save only that he presents us with a long series of catastrophes without sufficient explanation of previous phases of development. On the principle of that threefold solution of human destiny, three modes of lofty serious dramatic art may be enumerated, referring to the hidden spirit and the ultimate goal of life. In one of these the hero falls hopeless; in another the whole closes with a mixed satisfaction and reconciliation, still partially painful; in a third, a new life and the glorification of the inner man arise out of death and suffering. In illustration of the first of these species, involving heroic unmitigated ruin, I will only cite, among a host of modern examples, Wallenstein, Macbeth, and the Faust of popular story. The dramatic art of the ancients inclines with decided partiality to this altogether tragical catastrophe, which accorded well with their belief in a terrible predestinating fate. The excellence of this form is perhaps enhanced by the hero's ruin seeming to depend not so much on the arbitrary decrees of fate, as on his own voluntary and gradual approach to destruction, in the full exercise of free-will, as in the above-named tragedies.

This, then, is, upon the whole, the prevalent form of ancient tragedy. The second, or intermediate expiatory form, is likewise found in the works of the two leading tragedians of classic times. After disclosing the abyss of suffering and crime in the death of Agamemnon and the revengeful deed of Orestes, Æschylus, in his Eumenides, finishes the awful tableau with the acquittal of the unhappy

sufferer by a merciful oracular response. When Sophocles has melted our hearts by depicting the blindness and fate of Œdipus, the internecine fratricide of his twin sons, the long sorrows of the blind old man, and of his faithful nurse and daughter, he presents his death as a transition to the reconciled deities, in so beautiful a light, as to stir up within us feelings more pensive than painful. There are, indeed, many similar examples of this form of tragedy, both in ancient and modern writers, but few of them so noble and beautiful as those just mentioned.

The third and last mode of dramatic conclusion, in which extreme suffering is represented as issuing in a state of spiritual transfiguration, is especially suited to the Christian poet, and of these Calderon is unquestionably the most eminent. In his serious pieces of historic or tragic import, such as his "*Adoration of the Cross*," and "*The Steadfast Prince*," this is more readily as well as strikingly apparent: and these, selected from abundance of his productions, will suffice to illustrate my meaning. Neither is this thoroughly Christian *Idea* contained in the subject alone, but still more completely in the peculiar characteristics of sentiment and treatment pervading the whole of Calderon's efforts. In subjects of which the matter by no means suggested a glorious transition from suffering and death to a new and brighter existence, all is stamped with the impress of Christian charity and purification, and radiant with heavenly tints. Under every condition and circumstance Calderon is, of all dramatic poets, the most Christian, and for that reason the most romantic.

The development and peculiar form of Christian poetry are materially influenced by two facts: first, that it was everywhere preceded by a heathen poetry, of which the recollections were never wholly lost, even after the nations had become Christian; and, next, that it needed not to be based on any mythology of its own. There were two ways in which Christianity and Poetry were sought to be harmoniously blended. The one, Christian symbolism, included not only life but likewise the world and nature generally: whereby the full splendour of spiritual beauty was irradiated by the pure light of truth, and was thus enabled to serve Christian art as a substitute for pagan mythology.

This symbolism, emanating as far as possible from Christianity itself, and tinging all considerations of the world and of life, is the leading feature of the older allegorical school of Italian poets, and constitutes the essential distinction between them and the strictly romantic school from which they kept aloof with such jealous care. Their attempt at a symbolical treatment of life, nature, and the world, was grand and captivating, and succeeded in a high degree in Painting, but it never satisfied the strict requirements of poetic art; not even in Dante, much less in his successors Tasso and Milton. The other mould in which modern poetry may be cast, is that proceeding not from a poem comprehending the Christian cosmogony, but from individual life; from legend, and even from fragmentary portions of pagan myth, when admitting of exalted spiritual interpretation; coupled with earnest endeavours to blend isolated poetic notes into one ravishing strain of Christian harmony. Of this form Calderon is the noblest and most distinguished writer, whilst Dante is at the head of Christian poets, who have attuned their lyre in the first-named key. And this latter form, namely, not the introduction of celestial symbolism, as a whole, into the midst of the phenomena of everyday existence, but the purification of life, and all its several accords, by means of beauty symbolized and ennobled, constitutes the distinctive mark of the Romantic, as contrasted with Christian allegory.

Inasmuch as Spanish poetry generally remained free from foreign influence, and to the last maintained its purely romantic character, whilst the Christian chivalric poesy of mediæval Spain survived the period of modern culture, and attained to the highest degree of artistic perfection, it may here be desirable to convey to you some account of the precise nature of the Romantic. In addition to that intimate junction with the individualities of life alluded to above, and which constitutes it essentially a legendary poetry, as distinguished from a poetry of mere allegorical thought, the Romantic is based on sentiments of love, blending Christianity with genuine minstrelsy; sentiments employing suffering and sorrow as instruments of purification, exchanging the tragic earnestness of pagan mythology for a genial play of fancy, and selecting those forms of representation and language which best harmonize with feelings of tenderness and

love. In this extended signification, all poetry might seem to be of the Romantic cast, suppposing that term to designate Christian beauty and poetry. In fact, the Romantic is not really antagonistic to the true antique. The Trojan legends, the Homeric songs are thoroughly Romantic: so in the case of all that is absolutely poetical in the minstrelsy of Hindostan, of Persia, and other oriental or north-European nations. The poetic school of northern Europe differs from the actual Romantic only in its more copious pagan relics:* hence, it is marked by more profound natural feeling joined to an inferior degree of Christian beauty and purity of fancy. But wheresoever exalted views of life are enunciated feelingly and with enthusiastic presentiment of veiled significancy, there are small notes of that divine chaunt of love of which the full harmony is first found in Christianity. Ancient tragedy, despite of its generally gloomy impressions, is occasionally resonant with strains of this sort: genuine love sheds a lustre over generous hearts in the midst of pervading error and false images of horror. It is not the inimitable composition alone of Æschylus and Sophocles that we admire, but likewise their sentiment and profound feeling. The Romantic element is not opposed to the great masters of antiquity, but to imitators who have risen up among us, who assume the form without the inward love. Thus it is obviously not repugnant to the real essence of the antique, but rather to the false soul-less models that in our own time have been set up for imitation: as also to that modern standard which vainly seeks to influence life by slavishly adhering to the present, and thus becomes amenable to the joint tyranny of time and fashion, however refined may be the aim or the subject.

Of all Romantic poets Calderon comes nearest in spirit as well as feeling to the older Allegorical school of Dante and the early Italian bards, as does Shakspere to the northern school. Under the head of Allegory, in its correct acceptation, I would comprise the abstract essence of Christian figure and symbol, the expression, veil, or mirror, of an invisible world, according to our Christian conceptions. This is the spirit or soul of Christian poetry; the legends of

* On this subject see Mallet's Northern Antiquities, revised by Blackwell, 12mo. 1847.

romance and the national life form its body or outward material. After his own fashion Calderon has fixed this symbolism, by proceeding from individuality to life's manifold variety, as fully and deeply as Dante. In Calderon, who is, as it were, the last echo of the mediæval Catholicism, or as the rays of its setting sun, this regeneration and christian transfiguration of the Imagination, which characterizes his genius and poetry, obtained their highest perfection. Christian Allegory is not a simple popular poetry, scattered into fragments or consisting only of outward forms, but a conscious poetry of the invisible. Its business is to re-unite what was separated by the ancients—the severe symbolism of mystery with actual myth or modern epic. This is a symbolism of Truth, on the one hand, based on psychological principles, or the native depths of the soul, as in Shakspere; on the other, resulting in Christian transfiguration, as in Calderon.

It will easily be understood that between these three kinds of dramatic conclusion and representation—of hopeless destruction, reconciliation, and glorification—there are several dramatic gradations and combinations. It was only for the purpose of clearly defining the conceptions of high dramatic art, which consists not merely in skimming over the surface of life but penetrates its depths, and advances to its grand aim, that I have represented these three chief modes as markedly distinct and determined. The very antithesis of the antique and the modern, as has been already pointed out, is by no means complete or even positive, but rests on a greater or less preponderance of certain constituent elements. Whilst here and there instances may be found in which the issues of ancient drama tended to heroic glorification, examples of modern tragedy might be adduced equalling in power the most terrible catastrophes of classic plots.

It being the legitimate object of dramatic representation to sound the depths of feeling and penetrate the hidden mysteries of the spiritual life, the ancients have, for obvious reasons, bequeathed to us no fitting models for imitation, whatever may be the wonderful perfection to which they attained in their own style. As a general rule, it cannot be expected that any one standard of elevated tragedy should become valid and binding upon all nations. Even in the case

of Christian nations, united by a common religion, the sentiments of one people too widely differ from those of another to admit of dictation on a point of such vital importance as the guidance of inward perceptions and recognition by means of dramatic influences. In this department of art, each must adopt a standard most congenial to its moral habits and sentiments.

I am, accordingly, far from wishing to recommend the Spanish drama or Calderon, its brightest ornament, as a model of unreserved and direct imitation on our own stage. Though the high excellence of Christian tragedy, which is mainly attributable to this divine poet, would seem all but unattainable in its glorious perfection to him who should boldly resolve on delivering the stage from its present degradation. The external form of the Spanish drama is not equally available for our purposes with the internal structure; in the latter a more lyric development prevails, and it is altogether more akin to our general tastes than the epic and historic terseness of Shakspere. The florid imagery of a southern fancy, so characteristic of the outward form and poetic garb of Spanish tragedy, may be no less pleasing than appropriate where nature exhibits a similar profusion, but it cannot be imitated. The remarks I took occasion to make, when speaking of a poetical representation of mystic subjects, are at least partially applicable to those of Calderon's which contain Christian allegory. Were I disposed to start any objections against the dramatic genius of Calderon as a poet, who is thoroughly Romantic in the several species of dramatic composition, it would be the rapidity with which he hurries on his catastrophes. It cannot be doubted that these would be more strikingly effective if the plot were of more protracted development, if the enigma of life were oftener sketched with the profundity of Shakspere, and if he had not from the beginning given glimpses of the light which should be reserved for the close. Shakspere, again, is open to the opposite charge of too often placing before our eyes, in all its mystery and perplexity, the riddle of life, and leaving us, like a sceptic, without any hint of the solution. In those of his dramas which issue in a catastrophe, recourse is had to the old tragic solution which represents the hero's utter ruin, or partial expiation of crime

by suffering: rarely, if ever, the glorified purification depicted by Calderon in the glowing tints of love. In inward feeling, and in artistic treatment, the great English dramatist resembles the ancient poets rather than the Christian: inclining more to the old Northern or Scandinavian school than to the Grecian Profound sympathy with Nature is diffused throughout his works, constituting, as it were, their very soul: and it is this which animates his muse with a fascinating grace of rich transparent beauty. This peculiar element of Shakspere's poetry still remains as a characteristic of modern art, and will yet obtain a fuller development, when a higher poetry shall no longer represent the superficial aspects of every day life, but the secret life of the soul, in man as well as in Nature. In this point of view, his profound insight into Nature's secret workings transports Shakspere beyond the limits of dramatic verse: whilst in point of lucid arrangement he ranks next to Calderon, as a grand type and pattern commanding the admiration of all ages.

The Spanish drama, with its artistic form, may in one point serve for our rule and guidance: I allude to comedy, which in that country is of a thoroughly romantic character, and, therefore, really poetical. On the stage all attempts to elevate prosaic reality to poetical regions, by means of psychological acumen, or mere fashionable witticism, must of necessity prove utter failures. All who have had an opportunity of contrasting the so-called intrigue-plots of other nations, and especially of Germany, with the romantic charms of Calderon's plays, will scarcely find words sufficiently expressing their sense of the marked difference: poetic exuberance on the one hand and poverty on the other.

The poetry of southern and Catholic countries was intimately connected in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, passing through similar stages of development. In such countries as had, on the contrary, embraced Protestantism, the new faith effected a sensible change: since, together with a rejection of the Catholic creed, many symbols, poetic traditions, legendary as well as mythic, were indiscriminately ignored and suffered to lapse into oblivion. But as England, of all Protestant countries, retained the largest traces of the old Church in her hierarchical institutions and in her social

economy, so she was the first to inaugurate the revival of poetry, blooming in all the graces of nature and art, and assimilated, in a great degree, to the romantic style of southern Catholic climes. This is abundantly exemplified in Spenser, Shakspere, and Milton. It can hardly be necessary to insist here on the predominance of the romantic element of olden chivalry, and of the colouring of southern fancy, in Shakspere; Spenser, himself a chivalric poet, and also Milton, followed certain romantic models, more especially the Italian. The nearer our critical survey approaches to the literature of our own day, the more strictly it will be my duty to confine my observations to those poets and writers who mark the summit of national language and culture, and an examination of which are, on that account, most important and instructive for other nations and for the world. The three above-named poets, the greatest England ever produced, essentially include all that is worthy of note in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Spenser's poem—the Fairy Queen—conveys to us a good idea of the romantic spirit as it was still manifest in England under Elizabeth, the virgin queen, whose vanity was flattered by allusions delicately veiled in mythological and poetic guise. Spenser is rich and picturesque; his lyrics breathe an idyllic tenderness, and his muse is altogether redolent of the old Troubadours. Not his poetic treatment alone, his very language bears striking resemblance to the old German chivalric and love-song. The development of the English language is thus quite contrary, in point of chronological order, to the German.

In the fourteenth century Chaucer's verse is not unlike our homely rhymesters of the sixteenth century in Germany; whilst Spenser, at this latter period, is characterized by a tenderness and musical harmony for which the Minne-lieder were so distinguished. In a language of mixed derivation, like the English, there is a twofold ideal, according as the poet inclines to one or other of the components of his language. Of all English poets, Spenser is the most Germanic in diction, whilst Milton, on the other hand, has given the preponderance to the Latin element. The mould of Spenser's poem is, taken as a whole, infelicitous: the Allegory he has selected, lying at the very foundation on which his superstruc-

ture is erected, is not a living one, such as breathes and moves throughout the older chivalric poesy, revealing lofty conceptions of spiritual heroism and the secrets of exalted devotion by means of outward adventure and symbolical tales. It is that lifeless Allegory which is comprehended in a mere catalogue of the virtues; in short, one that we should never divine under its historical garb, if the author had not given an explanation in so many words.

The admiration of Shakspere, who in his lyrics and idylls closely followed this type, is a circumstance calculated to enhance Spenser's merits in our estimation. It is this poetic feature that most effectually reveals the true poet in all his native feeling. Shakspere evidently regarded the stage of which he was so distinguished a master, only as a prosaic application of his art, a faithful sketch of life for the multitude, at the best a condescension of his powers. How little he who sounded all the depths of varied passion, who drew human nature as it is, and with his magic pencil fixed each expression of its changing lineaments, the noblest and the coarsest, was himself rude or savage, is testified by the extreme tenderness that breathes over those idyllic effusions. Small is the number of those who are touched by this mild softness, just because it is so exquisite and so deep; but to a just comprehension of his dramas these lyrics are indispensable. They shew us that, in his dramatic works, he seldom represents the reflection of himself, of what he felt and was, but the world as it stood clearly before him, though separated by a wide interval from himself and his deep tenderness of soul. Accordingly, the images presented to our view are thoroughly faithful, devoid of flattery or embellishment. If intelligence and penetrating depth of observation, as far as they are necessary to the characterizing of life, were the first of poetic qualities, hardly any other poet could enter into competition with him. Others have sought to transport us, for a moment, to an ideal condition of humanity: he presents us with a picture of man, in the depths of his fall and moral disorganization, with all his doings and sufferings, his thoughts and desires, with a painful minuteness. In this respect he may almost be called a satirist; and well might the complicated enigma of existence, and of man's degradation, as set forth by him, produce a deeper and more lasting

impression than is made by a host of splenetic caricaturists, who are called satiric poets. But throughout his works there is a radiant reminiscence of man's pristine dignity and elevation, from which immorality and meanness are an abnormal apostasy: and on every occasion this reminiscence, united to the poet's own nobility of soul and tender feeling, beams forth in patriotic enthusiasm, sublime philanthropy, and glowing love.

Yet even the youthful fervour of love in his Romeo is a mere inspiration of death; Hamlet's sceptical views of life invest him with a strange mysteriousness; whilst in Lear, pain and grief reach the climax of madness. Hence this poet, externally so calm, so collected, so serene, and throughout controlled by reason, who appears as if he did nothing without a settled purpose, is inwardly the most dolorous and tragic of all ancient or modern dramatists.

I have said that he considered the drama as entirely a thing for the people, and, indeed, at first treated it in this light. He attached himself exclusively to popular comedy, as he found it already existing, and widened its arena in accordance with this principle and with subsequent necessities. Yet in his earlier and ruder efforts he introduced elements of gigantic grandeur and of horror into the popular drama: whilst he was likewise prodigal of representations of human degradation, passing for merry jests with the vulgar, but which were joined in his reflective and penetrating spirit with feelings of contempt or sorrowful sympathy. Popular tales and songs materially determined the external form of his productions: he was neither without learning, as has been too commonly though erroneously supposed, since Milton called him the free child of nature,* nor without art; still it is obvious that the deeper accords of nature could alone avail to unlock the close reserve of his solitary soul. The sympathetic affinity by which he came into most direct contact with his fellow-creatures was his patriotism: he immortalized the glorious achievements of his country in the French wars, which he gathered from the trusty old chroniclers, in a series of dramas which approach nearly to epic poems.

* The reference is to the lines in Milton's *L'Allegro*—

"Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

In the works of Shakspere a whole world is unfolded. Whosoever has comprehended this, and been penetrated with the spirit of his poetry will hardly allow the seeming want of form, or, rather, the form peculiar to his mighty genius, nor even the criticism of those who have misconceived the poet's meaning, to disturb his admiration; as he progresses he will, rather, approve the form as both sufficient and excellent in itself, and in harmonious conformity with the spirit and essence of his art. Shakspere's poetry is, upon the whole, near akin to the German spirit: hence he is appreciated in Germany more than any other foreign poet, and regarded with almost native affection. In his own country, many erroneous estimates of Shakspere have arisen from the superficial resemblance to him of some inferior poets. How interesting soever the poetry, his form and manner can in nowise be proposed as an exclusive model for our own stage; the less so that his feelings and perceptions, while they are eminently poetical, are by no means the only poetical ones, or entirely satisfy the demands of dramatic requirement. Our German drama is founded on the same, or at least a similar, historical and epic foundation, with that of Shakspere: it would, perhaps, in its present state of collective as well as individual effort, be more correct to say that it seeks to do so. Proceeding, then, in this direction, were we to judge from the most important efforts that have been as yet put forth, it would seem as if our drama were approximating more and more to the confines of purely lyrical treatment, after the manner of classical tragedy, or of Calderon's more finished Christian conceptions of life and its phenomena. With reference to practical application, Calderon is our highest standard of romantic and lyric beauty ennobled by Christian fancy, and he is almost nearer to the religious tastes of our age than Shakspere: though it were ungrateful to ignore the services of the latter in having furnished us with a permanent basis for the enduring structure of German poetry. Calderon, essentially a romantic bard, as we have seen, attached himself to the older school of Christian allegory, and has transferred its symbolism to the drama: the disposition and genius of Shakspere, on the contrary, are in more intimate communion with the northern school, whilst modern German poetry continues, as has ever been its wont, to combine a tendency to both. Shakspere's profound reflectiveness is an element which, though in close

contact with the sublimest heights of minstrelsy, belongs to epic verse rather than dramatic; for when found in conjunction with the latter, it almost invariably bears the appearance of being mutilated and desecrated. This deviation is the more to be guarded against as it is particularly seductive, and is likely to prove more disastrous in its consequences to the poet's imitators than copying his prosaic terseness or his historical circumstantiality of detail: nor is it calculated to enjoy any continuous amount of public favour. So also with Calderon's brilliant symbolism, scattered parts of which could not fail to be productive of injurious results, and on our own stage—hitherto the chaotic rendezvous of mingled sensations, opinions and views—would convey only a painful impression of profanation. His rich lyric beauty, however, will ever remain an exemplar for the imitative efforts of our dramatists.

Spenser's delightful chivalry and Shakspere's free poetry of life were misunderstood, contemned, and even persecuted, when fanaticism, which had existed only as a hidden disorder during Elizabeth's reign, broke forth with virulence under the first Charles. The great Dramatist was an object of especial aversion to the Puritans, to whom he, in turn, seems not to have been very partial: a feeling that is perpetuated on the part of the Methodists and other sects at the present day, widely diffused all over England. We are, however, indebted to those Puritan times for the production of a bard justly esteemed his country's boast and pride.* The poetry of the world and of nature being proscribed by the Puritans, the art which would correspond with the spirit of the age was obliged to be directed to the spiritual world, as is shown in Milton's uniform seriousness. His epic is, at the very outset, exposed to the difficulties which beset all Christian poems that celebrate the holy mysteries of religion. It is strange that he failed to discover the incompleteness of *Paradise Lost* as a unique whole, and that it could only appear, as it really is, the first act of a great Christian drama, of which the Creation, the Fall, and Redemption, are so many successive acts, closely linked together. He eventually perceived the defect, it is true, and appended *Paradise*

* And we are indebted to them for a poet of a different order—Samuel Butler—whose Hudibras is the most powerful piece of humour in the English language.

Regained: but the proportions of this latter to the first performance were not in keeping, and much too slight to admit of its constituting an efficient key-stone. When compared with Dante and Tasso, who were his models, Milton, as a Protestant, laboured under considerable disadvantages, since he was deprived of a vast storehouse of emblematical representation, tales, and traditions, which considerably enriched their verse. Accordingly, he sought to supply the deficiency by means of fables and allegories selected from the Koran and the Talmud, a remedy not at all in harmonious unison with the general complexion of a serious Christian poem. The merits of his epic do not, accordingly, consist in regularity of plan so much as in scattered passages of independent beauty, and in the perfection of his poetic diction. The universal admiration of Milton in the eighteenth century is based on his isolated descriptions of paradisaic innocence and beauty, his awful picture of Hell, with the character of its inhabitants, whom he sketched, after the antique, as giants of the Abyss. It is questionable if any real benefit accrued to the language of English poetry from its increased leaning to the Latinism of Milton rather than to the Germanism of Spenser: but this tendency being a fact, Milton must be regarded as the greatest master of style, and in many respects the standard of dignified poetic expression. It is not, however, easy to propose any fixed normal standard for a language composed, as the English is, of mixed ingredients: suspended between two extremes, it cannot but be subject to occasional oscillation to and fro. Shakspere alone exhibits the varied elements of copiousness, power, and brilliancy inherent in it.

After the reign of Puritan tastes another species of barbarism invaded the language and literature of England: a French ascendancy of the very worst description. Nor did the mind shake off those Gallic fetters until the close of the seventeenth century, a period coeval with the restoration of genuine freedom. But so broadcast had been the seeds of foreign predominance that those great old poets of whom I have been treating did not fully recover their lost influence till the commencement of the eighteenth century.

During the later Burgundian period, under Francis the First, and in the sixteenth century, French literature was peculiarly rich in historical memoirs, in which, indeed, it has

been at all times more or less fertile. These consist of a species of historical confessions, or life-portraits, which familiarize us with the state of social usages, of morality, and the very genius of the age, by means of vivid individual description and observation of the prevalent tone and features of society. At this time, moreover, the peculiar talent of commenting, in an easy philosophical manner, on the occurrences of daily life began to be developed. The names of Commines* and Montaigne are imperishably identified with this species of literature. The language of that period is for the most part of a loquacious and careless character, not unfrequently intricate and confused in the structure of its sentences: yet with that loquacity and carelessness a certain naiveté, a natural grace, is blended in the case of Montaigne and other distinguished writers, which is the more interesting and attractive from the contrast they suggest with the vigorous restrictions subsequently enforced. Marot and Rabelais, though neither of them is devoid of talent, clearly indicate the striking inferiority, as a whole, of French poetry and wit in the sixteenth century: as compared with the superior culture of contiguous countries, and their own progress in the sequel. It is necessary to examine attentively the rude and almost barbarous condition of French literature at this time, if we would rightly appreciate the beneficial changes effected by the Academy which Richelieu established. But as in his political system, so here too, the check introduced by that statesman was an iron yoke on anarchy, in language and in literature. In reference to its more immediate objects, namely, the promotion of a cultivated idiom, his plan was crowned with absolute success. Prose, generally, attained to such universality of finished polish towards the close of the seventeenth century, that not the leading authors alone, but the great body of writers, were remarkable for genuine purity of style. Neither did this originate in any ambitious motives of emulation; letters, female memoirs, mercantile compositions, never intended for the press, and emanating from unprofessional pens, all bore the same impress of cultivated taste, of which but few traces survived the eighteenth century. Of the poets, Racine attained to a harmony of diction and melody surpassing, in my

* The best English edition of these amusing Memoirs is in Bohn's Standard Library, 2 vols. 7s.

opinion, the high excellence of Milton in English, and of Virgil in Latin: harmony unequalled since in the French language. In behalf of the interests of poetry it is a matter of regret that a greater degree of freedom was not permitted to this artistic perfection: and that chivalric verse of the olden time, which had been the means of introducing so much beauty and charming grace both of invention and expression, was so indiscriminately rejected and despised. The same process that was successfully adopted in Italy and other lands would hardly have failed here: I allude to the grafting of a more artistic and earnest expression on the chivalric stock. French literature would, in that event, have inherited a larger share of the Romantic spirit and poetical freedom which Voltaire sighed for with so much ardour, and which he was so intent on remedying, however late, though with only partial success. Yet after all, a similar oblivion and sweeping rejection of by-gone memories are all but inseparable from every great comprehensive change even in the domains of literature. It was a revolution in every sense of the word: on that account, from the very first, many internal contradictions survived the shock, and a secret opposition was organized for the purpose of resisting the iron rule of power. This opposition threw off every vestige of disguise, under the Regent and in Louis the Fifteenth's time; when the forbidden fruit of British liberty in literature and language was eagerly and openly coveted. The irregular and injudicious mode of satisfying these desires, on the introduction of foreign tastes and models, resulted in a lawless and turbulent confusion. The waves of discord continued to increase in rage and violence, until at last a mighty and irresistible torrent of anarchy swept away the flood-gates of the social system, and will only with great difficulty be brought under the yoke of obedience.

The latter half of the seventeenth century witnessed the truly classic period of French poetry. Ronsard, who wrote during the sixteenth century, was but the remote forerunner of the great poets of the age of Louis XIV.: whilst Voltaire, who succeeded them in the eighteenth, is not always successful in his attempts at improvement. The essential defect under which French poetry seems particularly to labour, is the absence of a completely classical and national epic antecedent to the full development of other

species of composition. Ronsard,* the author of such an attempt, is destitute neither of fire nor dignity, but his style is full of bombast; a feature commonly characteristic of early efforts on the part of those who, emerging from comparative barbarism, are ambitious of display. Of all poets who were desirous of forming their style after purely antique models, Ronsard is the most strongly impressed with this characteristic. The very choice of his subject—the Franciad—was ill-conceived. Had a French poet selected some historical subject from the early annals of his country for the groundwork of an epic, the fabulous derivation of the Franks from Trojan heroes, which enjoyed extensive circulation in the middle ages, might not have been considered out of place as an episode in a performance of such a nature. But it was palpable evidence of the want of judgment to extend so thread-bare a legend to epic proportions. The deeds and fortunes of St. Louis would, in many respects, appear the most suitable subject for an epic of early French history, since they were intimately connected with the Romantic, and were likely to afford free scope for imagination side by side with national dignity and religious truth. The unsuccessful part which that monarch took in the Crusades might have been productive of some difficulty in the way of treatment and general plan of arrangement. As in the case of the *Maid of Orleans*, selected by Chapelain,† the circumstance that the heroine who had saved France in her hour of imminent peril, and had been idolatrously revered by the nation at large, was ultimately betrayed into the hands of the foe and consigned to an ignominious end, created no small obstacle to poetic success. The fate of French gallantry was the literary fate of Ronsard. He fell from the heaven of poetic glory and renown to the dust, and passed into complete oblivion. Yet his name cannot be omitted, nor his services

* Born 1525. He began life in the capacity of page to the Duke of Orleans, and was successively the favourite of four sovereigns, and of Mary Stuart. Besides his epic he was the author of many odes.

† Born 1595. He was commissioned by Richelieu to organize the celebrated French Academy. His epic, "La Pucelle," consisting of eighteen dreary books, is entirely different from Voltaire's powerful but licentious production of the same name.

ignored, in any critical history of French poesy: for it is an undeniable fact that the lofty Corneille, Chapelain's warm friend and admirer, not unfrequently suggests reminiscences of Ronsard's older school of composition.

French tragedy is in reality the most brilliant portion of her poetical literature, and that which has, at all times, justly attracted the greatest amount of foreign attention. It is so exactly adapted to the spirit of the national character and peculiar tone of feeling, that the high value at which it is rated is sufficiently justifiable, though it will be remembered, her early tragedy was seldom if ever founded on home subjects. It is true, the Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, and Turks, who appear upon her stage, are all more or less French in many qualities besides the language. Neither is the appropriation, by poetry, of exotic materials, in itself and abstractly, a circumstance calling for severe censure. Yet it cannot but be regarded as singular that French tragedy should almost invariably celebrate the heroes of a foreign land. This is entirely owing to the want of an epic poem combining the necessary conditions of artistic success with extensive popularity. Then, too, the great majority of materials available for tragedy, drawn from early French history would have been unseasonably introduced on a stage depending on court patronage, and scrupulously avoiding offensive allusions and contrasts. The defect, however, remained, to whatsoever cause it may have been owing: and an authoritative appeal to national feeling was kept up by no one kind of serious poetry. Voltaire recognized its importance, and resorted to various expedients for remedying the evil, not excepting personal dramatic efforts in connexion with subjects drawn from the history of France, and also from romantic chivalry. In the former, his example operated with indifferent results, and without any notable degree of imitation in his own age: but his success in the sphere of romantic tragedy was beyond the success of most of his countrymen.

Upon the whole, then, we have seen that French tragedy, whilst, as a general rule, it is based on subjects foreign to her national history, is nevertheless of a national turn as regards its prevalent tone and spirit. Though, for reasons previously stated, it is hardly fitted to constitute a model and standard for any other stage.

Many have been led to regard the form of French Tragedy as a copy of the Greek, from references pointedly alluded to by tragedians themselves in their prefatory remarks. On this head Racine appears to great advantage. He speaks of the artistic spirit of the Greeks with a true and lively knowledge, which cannot be said of any other French poet; and even now, when scientific research has thrown light on many points that were imperfectly understood in his day, we are impressed with the dignity and artistic appreciation of his nature. Corneille is perpetually at war with Aristotle and his commentators, who appear to be sadly in his way, until, weary of contention, the champion of poetic liberty makes terms with his uncompromising opponents. One cannot help regretting that his mighty genius should have suffered itself to be hampered with such confining and self-imposed fetters. Voltaire's prefaces are, for the most part, full of his reiterated boasts and lamentations: being couched in laudatory strains of the general excellence of every thing French, and of the French drama in particular, coupled with compassion for the shortcomings of Corneille and Racine. Whilst the reader is informed, in not very equivocal phrase, of a certain writer whose performances have not a little contributed to supply the deficiencies of those great poets.

It is scarcely necessary, at this time, to re-open the Aristotelian question which has been so satisfactorily disposed of ever since Lessing's day. The form of tragedy in France was needlessly confined by the supposed law of the unities: a law based on error and misconception, especially as regards *time* and *place*, and opposed to the fundamental principles of poetry. For in this matter, physical possibility is by no means to be estimated by severe arithmetical process, but by poetical, rather than historical probability, with a calculation as to its effects on the imagination. Among the varied influences brought to bear upon that age, Boileau must ever rank theoretically as well as practically, as the most narrowing in point of limitation of original genius. His pernicious power over French poetry may be gathered from the fact, that he was very nearly treating Corneille as he had already treated Chapelain. His natural poetic feeling may be learnt from the mechanical manifestation enjoined in his precept, always to compose the last verse of a rhyming couplet first.

In the place of sound judgment and genuine art, he was in the habit of indulging in sneers that were sometimes of the coarsest: regardless of poetic defects, he was very particular about the swell of ill-sounding rhyme. I would almost concur with Racine who, when writing to his son respecting Boileau, his personal friend, described him as "a good honest man, but profoundly ignorant of poetry."

Another of Boileau's* injunctions on which he laid great stress, was that derived from Horace, that a work should be as many years before it is published as a child lies months in the womb before it is born. Notwithstanding this enactment of the literary dictator, there is little doubt that Racine's *Athalie* and Corneille's *Cid*, in my opinion the two most consummate productions of the French dramatic muse, were the offspring of a fresh and vigorous enthusiasm, rather than of careful elaboration. Those two dramas are fair indications of the point at which French tragedy stopped short of its antique model.

In Aristotle's conception of the nature of tragedy, however much it may have escaped the observation of his more recent commentators, there is a plain acknowledgment that the lyric portions and chorus are of essential importance: inasmuch as they support and cement the whole structure. Whence it follows that this feature must be borne in mind by those who propose to imitate this form of dramatic art. Corneille's *Cid* is thoroughly lyrical; this gives him a magical power, and enables him to withstand all the assaults of criticism and of envy. Whilst in his *Athalie*, Racine has introduced the chorus, modified indeed to suit altered circumstances, but on the whole with great poetic success. Had tragedy continued in the same course as was marked out by these great masters of the French drama, it would have approximated much more closely to the fire and elevation of its prototype. Many of the fetters imposed on it by prosaic misconceptions would, of themselves, have fallen away, and the genius of the drama, once freed from these, would have attained a much higher development.

* With reference to Schlegel's opinion, it must be remembered that Boileau was a critic of no mean powers, though anti-romantic in his views. His imitation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* is, in itself, a proof of his grasp of intellect.—*Transl. note.*

But when it became the prevalent fashion to omit the lyric constituent of ancient tragedy in modern composition, the disproportion of the remainder was strikingly incongruous; more especially in those mythological instances where similar subjects had been treated, and where they constituted an entire drama. The lyric element being wanting, equilibrium was destroyed, and it was found necessary to adopt some of those means which had been resorted to by the ancients in the declining period of the classic drama. The plot was rendered intricate by a crowd of interpolated intrigues, a practice totally at variance with the dignified bearing of tragedy; or engrossing attention was directed to the rhetoric of the passions, which every tragical subject affords such means of introducing. And this, in fact, is the brilliant side of French tragedy, asserting its high and almost incomparable distinction, and emphatically harmonizing with the character and genius of a nation which is at all times potently swayed by rhetoric, and inclines, even in private life, to the rhetoric of the passions. In a certain measure, too, this is an element indispensable to dramatic representation. Yet it ought not to prevail in so exclusive a manner as it does in French tragedy: it were, at any rate, contrary to the principles of sound reason and judgment to set up a standard such as this, suited only to the peculiar tastes of France, for the adoption of other nations who may have stronger poetic than rhetorical faculties.

The predilection of the French people for the rhetorical constituent of tragedy is so strong as to attract their admiration and criticism to individual points rather than to the merits of a whole performance. Keeping this fact in view, we shall find that the plots which have the most poetic solution, throughout the range of French tragedy, are precisely those resembling antiquity the most, and issuing in the direst catastrophe without any mitigation. Rarely does the issue accord with the true aspirations of the Christian bard: death ending in victory, as in Racine's *Athalie;* or sorrow brightening into severe happiness, as in Voltaire's *Alzire.* This latter production, in my opinion, is the author's masterpiece, in which he appears a true poet, and worthy of his two distinguished predecessors in the Tragic art.

LECTURE XIII.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.—BACON, HUGO GROTIUS, DESCARTES, BOSSUET, PASCAL.—CHANGE IN MODE OF THOUGHT.—SPIRIT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—SKETCH OF FRENCH ATHEISM AND REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT.

THE seventeenth century was rich in distinguished writers, not only in elegant literature, poetry and eloquence, but likewise in science and philosophy. The philosophic system of the eighteenth century, which was so widely diffused throughout the regions of literature, and attained to a paramount influence over the destinies of nations and of collective humanity, originated in the conceptions of certain earnest thinkers during the preceding age: though, it is true, there was in part a material divergence from the spirit and original intentions of the founders. If we would have a just expression of the intellectual and social changes wrought by Voltaire and Rousseau, not only in the aspect and condition of France, but also the whole of Europe; in a word, if we would comprehend aright the genius of the eighteenth century, it is fitting that we should briefly review the merits of Bacon, Descartes, Locke, and some other of the heroes belonging to a former period.

The sixteenth century was the age of ferment and strife, and it was not until towards the close of it that the human mind began to recover from the violent shock it had sustained. With the seventeenth century new paths of thinking and investigation were opened, owing to the revival of classical learning, the extension given to the natural sciences and geography, and the general commotion and difference in religious belief, occasioned by Protestantism. The first name suggested by the mention of these several features is Bacon. This mighty genius ranks as the father of modern physics, inasmuch as he brought back the spirit of investigation from the barren verbal subtleties of the schools to nature and experience: he made and completed

many important discoveries himself, and seems to have had a dim and imperfect foresight of many others. Stimulated by his capacious and stirring intellect, experimental science extended her boundaries in every direction: intellectual culture, nay, the social organization of modern Europe generally, assumed a new shape and complexion. The ulterior consequences of this mighty change became objectionable, dangerous, and even terrible in their tendency, at the time when Bacon's followers and admirers in the eighteenth century attempted to wrest from mere experience and the senses, what he had never assumed them to possess; namely, the law of life and conduct, and the essentials of faith and hope: while they rejected with cool contempt, as fanaticism, every exalted hope and soothing affection which could not be practically proved. All this was quite contrary, however, to the spirit and aim of the founder of this philosophy. In illustration, I would only refer here, to that well known sentence of his, deservedly remembered by all:—"A little Philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism; but depth in Philosophy bringeth man's mind about to Religion."*

Both in religion and in natural philosophy, this great thinker believed many things that would have been regarded as mere superstition by his partizans and admirers in later times. Neither is it to be supposed that this was a mere conventional acquiescence in an established belief, or some prejudice not yet overcome of his education and age. His declarations on these very topics relating to a supernatural world, are most of all stamped with the characteristic impress of his clear and penetrating spirit. He was a man of feeling as well as of invention, and though the world of experience had appeared to him in quite a new light, the higher and divine region of the spiritual world, situated far above common sensible experience, was not viewed by him either obscurely or remotely. How little he partook, I will not merely say of the crude materialism of some of his followers, but even of the more refined deification of nature, which during the eighteenth century was transplanted from France to Germany, like some rank offshoot of natural philosophy, is proved by his views of the substantial essence of a correct

* Bacon's Essays, XVI. On Atheism, page 45 of the edition printed uniform with the present volume.

physical system. The natural philosophy of the ancients was, according to a judgment pronounced by himself, open to the following censure, viz.: "that they held nature to constitute an image of the Divinity, whereas it is in conformity with Truth as well as Christianity to regard man as the sole image and likeness of his Creator, and to look upon nature as his handiwork." In the term Natural Philosophy of the ancients, Bacon evidently includes, as may be seen from the general results attributed to it, no mere individual theory or system, but altogether the best and most excellent fruits of their research within the boundaries not only of physical science, but also of mythology and natural religion. And when he claims for man exclusively the high privilege according to Christian doctrine, of being the likeness and image of God, he is not to be understood as deriving this dignity purely from the high position of constituting the most glorious and most complex of all natural productions: but in the literal sense of the Bible that this likeness and image is the gift of God's love and inspiration. The figurative expression that nature is not a mirror or image of the Godhead, but his handiwork—if comprehended in all its profundity, will be seen to convey a perfect explanation of the relations of the sensible and the super-sensible world of nature and of divinity. It preeminently declares the fact that nature has an independent self-existence, but was created by God for an especial purpose. In a word, Bacon's plain and easy discrimination between ancient philosophy and his own Christian ideas, is an intelligible and clear rule for fixing the right medium between profane nature-worship on the one hand, and gloomy hatred of nature on the other: to which latter one-sided reason is peculiarly prone; when intent only upon morality, it is perplexed in its apprehensions of nature, and has only imperfect and confused notions of divinity. But a right appreciation of the actual difference between nature and God, is the most important point both of thought and belief, of life and conduct. Bacon's views on this head are the more fittingly introduced here, because the philosophy of our own time is for the most part distracted between the two extremes indicated above: the reprehensible nature-worship of some who do not distinguish between the Creator and his works, God and the world: or on the other, the hatred and blindness of those despisers of

nature, whose reason is exclusively directed to their personal destiny. The just medium between these opposite errors, that is to say, the only correct consideration of nature, is that involved in a sense of intimate connection with her, joined at the same time to a conscious conviction of our immeasurable superiority, morally, and to a proper awe of those of her elements that significantly point to matters of higher import than herself. All such vestiges, exciting either love or fear, as a silent law, or a prophetic declaration, reveal the hand that formed them and the purpose which they are designed to accomplish.

Not less than the influence exerted by Bacon on philosophy and thought generally, was that of Hugo Grotius, during the seventeenth and a portion of the eighteenth century, on the practical and political world, and the ethics of international intercourse. Neither was this influence devoid of happy and salutary results: the religious tie hitherto maintaining the nations of the West in political unity being now severed, and Macchiavelli's impious and unjust system gradually becoming the prevalent standard of state policy, it was an act of the greatest humanity to found a system of jurisprudence for the common benefit of Europe, torn by civil war, disjointed in creed, inflamed with passion, and corrupted by false maxims of government. The doctrines of Grotius were extensively recognized as constituting a correct standard. It is an elevating thought to find a scholar and a profound thinker, without any power other than that of intellect and honest will, becoming the actual founder of a new code of international law: as he gained the reverential esteem of his own age, so he justly inherits the grateful thanks of posterity. Regarded as a system, the international code introduced by Hugo Grotius and his successors may, indeed, appear very defective, and would hardly be proof against the varied attacks of the sceptic. The loss of that religious tie which formerly united all European states in one common bond of brotherhood, was, in reality, irreparable. In default of the same, justice was now based on the social tendency and destiny of man, essentially inherent in his constitution. In proportion as the successors of Grotius based common law on nature and reason alone, reference to the primary source of all justice was more and more

frequently omitted; the more inevitably did the theory and even practice, of international law lose itself in idle and insoluble subtleties of speculation on the one hand, and degenerate, on the other, into extravagant and erroneous consequences. To what monstrosities did not the law of nature and the system of reason eventually lead, both in opinion and practice, during the latter half of the eighteenth century! It was, nevertheless, a most beneficial circumstance that the doctrine of international law extended and recognized by means of Grotius availed to stem the rapid tide of corruption for more than a century. For though it cannot be denied that from 1648-1740, there were instances of open and flagrant injustice in international transactions, yet they were generally protested against. If actual deeds could not be undone, it was still something to assert and vindicate the principles of rectitude. Violence and rapacity were, at any rate, bound by the forms of justice, and had to assume the semblance of rectitude. These beneficial influences continued to be manifest from 1740-1772; in a less degree, they extended their salutary operations to years subsequent to that period when Europe, a second time, suffered great and universal violation of her rights, and when former rules of guidance no longer prevailed, owing to an entire change in the circumstances and political fabric of states. Europe has, of late, been fully alive to this change, during fifteen years of unparalleled oppression, when the principles of bygone times were remorselessly trodden under foot and shivered into fragments before the sword of the conqueror. But after that monstrous tyranny had been overtaken by its doom, and passed away like a meteor; and by the divine Providence, all things had been brought to a favourable issue; those who are at the helm of national affairs clearly perceive that the mutual relations of Christian states and people, can no longer rest on the shallow foundation of universal natural right, or the mere force of reason, in accordance with usages now obsolete; and they are aware of the necessity of conforming to the loftier requirements of Christian justice and love, and the common destiny of mankind.

Of all writings that have exercised a great and universal influence over the practical world and the political relations of Europe, those of Grotius were, unquestionably, of the

most salutary kind, and can be compared in importance only with the preceding system of Macchiavelli, or the later theories of Rousseau.

Besides his exertions in behalf of the restoration and recognition of the theory and practice of equity, Hugo Grotius manifested his good will in an attempt to reduce religious truths to formal and, as it were, juridical proof. It was one of the indirect effects of Protestantism, that religion was the constant theme of contention, and, accordingly, was more and more treated as a matter of the understanding—a feature not a little characteristic of Calvin's genius, who founded the second great Protestant sect. In the effort alluded to, which was a growing want, Grotius found many followers, his designs being, indisputably, most worthy. Viewed in itself, it would appear as if religious impressions had grown faint and feeble, when that which is essentially a thing of inward feeling and living faith begins to be considered and defended with critical acumen; till, eventually, religious truth is treated like a legal process, or is attempted to be solved like a geometrical problem as by Pascal.

The philosophic exertions of Descartes, far from being equally meritorious with those of Bacon and Grotius, may rather be said to have had a noxious and seductive influence on his own and the succeeding age. His example is an instance of the possibility of being a great mathematician, according as that science has been hitherto pursued (which he certainly was for his age), without necessarily being a successful philosopher. The hypothesis of vortices, by which Descartes tried to explain not only separate facts in physics, but likewise the origin of the universe, has indeed long since been forgotten. His system, on the whole, enjoyed only a fleeting existence, and never spread far beyond France: yet his philosophy, such as it was, influenced the spirit of the seventeenth and even the eighteenth century in no small degree. His method, more especially, as he himself termed it, or the manner in which he took the initiatory philosophic steps, found many followers. He desired to be an original thinker, in the strictest and most complete sense of the word. To this end, he resolved entirely to forget all that he had hitherto learnt, believed,

and thought, and to begin entirely anew. Of course, this original thinker did not spare any of the philosophers or inquirers who had preceded him, and passed over their labours as unworthy of regard. But if it were possible, by a single arbitrary effort, to break the thread of hereditary thought to which we are inseparably connected through language, the consequences would be only destructive. It is as if in the political world it were attempted suddenly to stop the wheel of public life for the purpose of substituting a more perfect constitution, based on pure reason, in place of that evolved by the nation itself in the progress and struggle of ages. That Truth cannot be attained, any more than a fitting constitution, by means of an abrupt oblivion and rejection of the past, is shewn in the annals of philosophy, which extend more than two thousand years back, and abundantly expose the fruits of such self-sufficient thinkers. The most natural consequences of a process like this would be neither to see nor avoid the most ordinary errors into which human reason is led, when endeavouring to explore the truth by its own unassisted means. These errors are, accordingly, reiterated, and sometimes held up as discoveries, though they have been repeatedly corrected or refuted. As regards total oblivion of all that has been done, or attempted to be done, by preceding generations, it is so impracticable to keep this resolution of independent individuality of thought, that Descartes is by no means the first of those contemptuous thinkers whose most original opinions and alleged discoveries are, after all, taken from their predecessors, and only changed in words and form. The borrowing often indeed proceeds from an imperfect recollection and self-deception, without a distinct consciousness of the fact. Descartes has been greatly commended for his strict discrimination between spirit and matter. It cannot but appear very strange that it should be regarded as new and original to maintain a distinction between intellect and body. But the unsatisfactory manner of mathematical demonstration which that philosopher adopted, in order to settle the distinction in question, was productive of no real benefit, since it only involved the connection of soul and body, and their reciprocal action, in inextricable difficulties. Since his day, it has remained a characteristic of philosophy to oscillate

unceasingly between the *Ego* and the external world of sense: at one time, the former was supposed to originate everything; at another, the latter was alleged to contain all experimental philosophy, including the moral and Divine, which was simply impossible. At all events, the connection subsisting between the *Ego* and the outer world has continued to be an incomprehensible problem, and simply because the higher Divine region, the ground on which both rest, and whose light illumines and explains both, has been altogether lost sight of. The medium of the soul was wanting to lead the spirit to a recognition of the Truth, and of the external world as the Creator's handiwork. The philosophy of that period was too much hampered with the abstractions of dialectic thought, in the limits of which the truth can never be found, and where, if found, transplanted from some other quarter, she can never be long retained in her integrity. The higher light of spiritual knowledge, although inseparable from religion, had never been completely disclosed in science: only some isolated broken rays had escaped, as it were, from the bondage in which all living knowledge had been kept during the ascendency of rationalism. It was accounted an additional merit of Descartes to prove the existence of God from pure reason alone, after the manner of a mathematical proposition. If this may really be termed meritorious, it belongs not to Descartes; being altogether derived from those mediæval philosophers whom Descartes, and his contemporaries, took every opportunity of depreciating. Undoubtedly the tone and spirit of their meaning were totally different; for they adduced reason by way of supplementary, and as it were, superfluous proof, in confirmation of that truth, the most glorious of all, of which a firm conviction may be gained in a very different way, and which constitutes the essential spirit and centre of all other convictions and thoughts, of all activity and plans of life. As every created thing or organized being, in one way or another, proclaims the unfathomable greatness of the Creator, so human reason, generally so vain of her own power and skill, may join in the universal chorus to the praise of God. Or as in human affairs it is considered the most perfect triumph of a good and righteous cause, when even the opponent can be brought, however reluctantly, to confess its justice

and truth, so man's reason may be admitted to bear testimony in favour of Divine truth. But if the existence of the Deity, which we first learn to know by internal perception, be exclusively proved from argumentative reasoning, as by Descartes, the Deity is, in a certain measure, made dependent on reason, if not actually synonymous and identical with it; whilst the essence of eternal love is thus dragged down to the regions of abstract conception, and the appearance of the Absolute. It has never succeeded, and never will succeed, to seek to demonstrate the existence of God, in the absence of the inner perception and conviction of His being, to natures that are incapable of feeling and believing it.

The followers and associates of Descartes formed a school of their own in France, whose tenets held sway for some time. Yet here and there, a few minds who asserted their independence, remained staunch in their allegiance to religious truth, and adopted only so much of the system as was consistent with their faith. This may be affirmed of Malebranche, who could not, however, entirely extricate himself from the difficulties regarding the mutual relations of thought and external objects, the connection between spirit and matter. In antagonism to Descartes, and as a critical, acute, and philosophical defender of revelation, Huet became famous: whilst during the same period, Fenelon, notwithstanding the prevalence of that philosophy and metaphysical contention, expressed the suggestions of his amiable nature in the most exquisite language. But greater than all these was the influence of one whose name I have purposely deferred mentioning till now, in securing the independence of religious thought. I allude to Bossuet, the first of French authors, in point of eloquence and language. It might perhaps be doubted whether the splendour of such eloquence is altogether appropriate to religious truth, and whether the simplicity of Christian doctrine may not be more fittingly conveyed by means of an artless and simply cordial exposition. However this may be, it is certain that an orator, endowed as he was, with a comprehensive grasp of intellect and with brilliancy of expression, was of essential benefit to his age, and could not but be so at any period of religious controversy before the truth had completely

triumphed. It should be remembered, too, that Bossuet's eloquence was by no means restricted to purely theological topics. Whatever in life and morals, in Church and State, in politics and history, and generally in human affairs, invited and demanded serious reflection, was always regarded by this eminent man in a religious point of view, and as coming within his province.

If it be allowable to institute a comparison between orators and poets, in regard to representation and language, I should be disposed to attribute to certain characteristics of Bossuet an excellence which ranks him even higher than the greatest of those French poets who were his contemporaries. Finished perfection of art and style is included within a fixed sphere. Situated between the lofty and sublime and that which is altogether artificial in form, deviations in both directions are both easy and numerous. Poets and writers exist in abundance, who are grand and sublime without being at the same time polished and uniformly harmonious. Whilst others unite over-solicitousness and effeminacy to a high degree of finish and uniformity, they are without the strength of sublimity, — noble and tender but not grand. Voltaire was well aware of this, when he laid bare the faults of his two predecessors in French tragedy, whom it was his chief ambition to surpass. He has no difficulty in discovering passages in Corneille open to this charge of obsolete rudeness of diction and bombastic exaggeration. It seems to me that he had a higher reverence for Corneille's kindred genius than of Racine whom he held to be deficient in sublimity and pathos, in which he himself excelled. But his opinion of Racine was in the main unjust: for if we regard the mere rhetoric of the passions, there is scarcely one in the whole range of French tragedies that can compete with Racine's *Phædra*. His *Athalie*, again, breathes a different but still loftier spirit of enthusiasm. If other productions of the same author are more especially characterized by harmonious repose and delicacy, for instance his *Berenice*, it will be seen that this is in keeping with the nature of the subject. This much, however, must be granted to Voltaire, that Racine would have been a still grander and more perfect poet than he is, had he united a little of Corneille's impetuous sublimity, the effect of which is somewhat

marred by the prodigality with which it is lavished, to his own harmony of language and versification, as well as characteristic tenderness. As far as orators can be classed with poets, this combination of excellencies is found in Bossuet. Severely pure and polished, as also noble in expression, he is ever grand and sublime, where the subject admits of it, without once descending to bombast. I, therefore, cheerfully assent to the high praises bestowed by French critics on the distinguished excellence of one who is both a model of perfect style and expression, and a rich source and storehouse of the most salutary and exalted truths.

There is yet another mode in which Bossuet's superiority, as a writer and orator, to the distinguished poets of his nation and age, is manifest. French literature is in many essential points an imitation of the earlier cultivated nations of antiquity, and is, moreover, based on this imitation, much in the same manner as the literature of Rome is on that of Greece. This circumstance is, in itself, no reproach, being in a certain measure inevitable in the case of all nations attaining to a late degree of culture, and more particularly common to countries whose genius, like that of Rome and France, has a practical tendency rather than the development of internal mental activity. It were a gross mistake to place Roman literature on a level with the Greek inventive spirit; but I have endeavoured to shew how the Romans made up for their great inferiority in poetry and pure philosophy by that thoroughly Roman sentiment, the all-pervading Idea of Rome, which gave so dignified and peculiar a tone to the whole of their literature. An Idea so lofty and controlling is a sufficient counterpoise, producing firmness and dignity of character. It was a similarly animating conviction that elevated the mind of Bossuet: the Idea of the Catholic Church and her connexion with history, politics, and science. No mere faith of custom, but the vivifying spirit of life, constituting, as it were, his second nature, and a view of the world which shed light on all other subjects. For this reason he is so unique in manner, and so independent of his predecessors, who, nevertheless, were his types as to style and oratory, his instructors in history. What the patriotic Idea of Rome's greatness did for the Romans, Bossuet's spirit

might have effected for Catholic France in a superior degree, had it only been more generally diffused. But so far was this Christian Idea from being general, that the most excellent and at the same time religious poet France ever produced was stopped midway in his career of exalted development by the jarring discord of internal conviction, and the rules of that dramatic art which he had modelled after the antique. It is a well-known fact that Racine, who was attached to the opinions of the Jansenists, indulged in erroneous notions of artistic propriety, and for a long time declined writing for the theatre, which he deemed an absolutely objectionable institution. The poet's excessive scrupulosity is sufficiently amiable in the man; and, indeed, his private life, as also his letters furnish abundant proofs of the deep religious sentiment which animated his whole being. Though his unconditional rejection of the theatre may not be approved by our own judgment, yet there was, doubtless, much in the tragic art of that day ill fitted to coincide with Christian ideas of morality. Be this as it may, the want of harmony remains, and Racine would have done well to endeavour to reconcile his faith and his art, as he seems to have commenced doing in his Athalie. How striking is the pre-eminence of Spain over France in this respect! With the former, a thoroughly Catholic people, religion, poetry, and truth, instead of being discordant, met in beautiful harmony.

The sect of the Jansenists contributed several writers of distinguished merit, of these I will now only name Pascal: on the whole, however, these disputes exercised an injurious influence over the literature of France. A few words will suffice to recall the subject of those disputes. The combat was as old as human reason itself, and not to be solved within its strict limits; for it concerned the liberty of man in juxtaposition with natural necessity, or with the omnipotence and omniscience of God. Being purely a question belonging to reason, it ought never to have been transferred to religion. Hence its representatives and defenders have never taken any other than a negative interest in it, the avoidance merely of two equally objectionable extremes. The doctrine of free-will and human merit promulgated in the fifth and sixth centuries, according to which man was rendered independent

of God and of the saving influence of grace, was uncompromisingly attacked by the champions of the Truth, and successively refuted and rejected. Such was the fate, too, of the opposite heresy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: that of denying all possibility of man's co-operating for his own benefit and salvation. The very existence of independent action was steadily denied him, whilst he was subjected to unlimited predestination, after the fashion of Pagan inexorable necessity, or Mahometan belief in a predetermining fate. The manner in which the dispute was conducted considerably aggravated its otherwise evil tendencies. Pascal's "Provincial Letters" have come to be regarded as a classic portion of French literature, from their copious wit as well as the beauty of their language; but if they are to be judged by the spirit of their general contents, they can only be termed a master-piece of sophistry. All the resources of that ingenious art were laid under contribution in order to render his opponents, the Jesuits, contemptible and odious. No one conversant with the history and opinions of the period during which the strife raged, will doubt that truth was often and signally violated. But even if this celebrated writer, who was Voltaire's forerunner in wit, genius, and language, had done less violence to truth in individual instances, how pernicious must the effect of such contentious wrangling and bitter derision nevertheless have been when practised on the subject of religion! In this instance, the contest was confined to the Jesuits who were personally offensive to Pascal, a man who yet was deeply earnest in religion, and who even wished to demonstrate it mathematically. But what guarantee was there that these same weapons might not speedily be directed at religion itself? This happened, too, ere long; the system of sophistry, dexterously barbed with cunning wit and polished sarcasm, proved a dangerous tool, a keen-edged sword in the hand of Voltaire, who found a vast magazine ready to his hand in Bayle, who had previously exhausted all his skill in directing doubts, objections, jeers, and allusions at all points, like a running fire, against the yet unshaken tower of Faith.

Philosophy, on the whole, gradually deteriorated during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The example of Hobbes testifies to the facility of transition from Bacon's

new method of philosophising—without reflecting any blame on that great man—to the most decided infidelity and materialism. The age was, however, not sufficiently ripe for the reception of that theory respecting the unconditional right of the stronger, to which the philosopher of Malmesbury was unreservedly committed. In a century, or a century and a half later, his atheistical views of the political as of the physical world would have been more readily received. Accordingly, Locke met with general acceptance, just because his system was not so inconsistent with the recognized moral principles and feelings of his time; and the exposition of his views, though prolix, was yet easy of comprehension—or, at least, seemed so. Essentially it was the same: nay, even more pernicious in its results, inasmuch as error gained increased extension by being put forth in a more moderate shape. It is sufficiently obvious that no kind of faith or exalted hope can long endure, if the whole of truth is to be circumscribed within the narrow circle of sense and sensuous experience. Locke's personal belief in the Deity was compatible with his general mode of thought; for it frequently happens that he who is the first to open up a new path of inquiry does not perceive the consequences immediately resulting, or if he perceives, does not admit them. This system, if strictly carried out, dispenses with deeper thought, restricting itself to pure sensation and sensuous experience. Thus many have lived on the credit of Locke's name and reputation who have assumed the pretensions of unprejudiced self-thinkers. But when the subject of this sort of sensuous experience, the powers it arrogates, and the effects it produces are maturely investigated, doubts and strange conceptions meet the inquirer at every turn: such was especially the case in England. The question relative to what passes in the back-ground of this lively picture of the world of sense cannot be evaded, however strong the determination to ignore it. The doctrine that begins by modestly asserting that there is no other medium of knowledge than sense and experience, is in reality a veiled though not expressed Materialism, as was proved in France, where the mask was soon thrown aside.

Indirectly, though quite unintentionally, Newton contributed to the formation of the philosophy of the eighteenth

century; since those who adhered to the new system appealed to his high authority; and after his great discoveries it seemed possible to explain all things by means of physics without the aid of religion. Both Newton and Bacon would have turned away in disgust from those who idolized them in the eighteenth century. In the case of the former, his strong attachment to Christianity and to the Bible was often pitied and deplored by his philosophic successors as the peculiar weakness of a mind naturally strong. In many of his expressions respecting the relations of the Deity to nature, or the starry heavens as the laboratory and reflex of the Divine glory, there is not merely a substratum of enthusiasm, but also of earnest conviction, bearing a peculiar impress, and proving that he had often deliberated on the supreme object of all contemplation, even though he was not actually a philosopher, and knew nothing of metaphysics. In the eighteenth century England was the foremost of European nations in literary glory. The whole of modern French philosophy emanated from that of Bacon, Locke, and other Englishmen: their system, however, when transplanted to France, soon assumed a new shape, distinct from that of its birth-place. Whilst German literature received a fresh impulse and a new direction, towards the middle of the century, under the influence of English poetry and criticism.

Voltaire was, more especially, the means of introducing the philosophy of Locke and Newton into France. It was strange that he so seldom employed the wonderful grandeur of nature, as it was more and more displayed by the aid of science, in glorifying the Creator, but almost always made it subservient to man's humiliation and insignificance, as contrasted with the immeasureable extent of the starry heavens. As if the mind, which contemplated all these stars and suns were not greatly superior to them: as if God resembled an earthly potentate who, of the millions subject to his sceptre, may easily be supposed to lose sight of the inhabitants of some obscure village situated on the frontiers of his dominions. Upon the whole, the eighteenth century generally employed increased natural science, which it had received as a glorious heritage from the preceding age, in a manner hostile to religious truth. Voltaire was destitute of a really systematic unbelief, involving fixed principles, definite philo-

sophical opinions, or even a distinct form of philosophic doubt. Just as the Sophists of antiquity manifested their dexterity and skill in defending two diametrically opposite views with all their eloquence, so Voltaire attacked Providence in one treatise, and lent his support to it in another. But he is so far honest as to render it plain enough which of these works was his own favourite. In numerous instances he seems to have indulged without reserve his aversion to Christianity: and, indeed, to religion generally. In this respect his genius operated like a destructive weapon to the dissolution of all earnest, moral and religious thought. Yet I cannot help thinking that Voltaire did infinitely more mischief by his pernicious views of history than by all his scoffing at religion. As in poetry, so here he was sensibly aware of the defects under which his country's literature laboured. Since the time of Cardinal Retz, the abundance of historical memoirs, which were both attractive in style and of an instructive nature, had been greatly on the increase: so much so, that they constituted almost a literature by themselves, extremely entertaining and peculiarly French. Yet by this means history could not well escape falling into a merely conversational tone, and becoming a fragmentary collection of isolated anecdotes, to the serious detriment of sober historic truth. Even if these faults were avoided, and the general execution ever so clever, it was after all but a subordinate species, a preparatory grouping of materials, anything but history in its true acceptation. There is, at any rate, an immense distance between the most genial performances of this kind, and historical composition as it was understood by the Ancients, and by Macchiavelli among the moderns. Thus it happened that whilst French literature was stocked with the productions of lively narrators, couched in respectable and easy diction, it was altogether without a really classic national history, the work of some great original genius. Of this want, then, Voltaire was fully cognizant, and in accordance with the comprehensive grasp of his ambition, he sought to supply that want. France herself acknowledges the utter failure of his attempt; and that neither in point of art nor of representation and style, suited to the range of history, can he for a moment be compared, I will not say with the best ancient masters, but with

the leading historians of England: for instance, Hume and Robertson. Yet the influence of his historic views on English writers, especially on Gibbon, was very extensive, and they may be said to have become all but dominant in the eighteenth century. The characteristic feature of Voltaire's views was a deep-seated hatred of the clergy, of Christianity, and of religion generally, displayed on every occasion and in all possible forms. Politically, they were marked by strong partiality and prejudice for republican institutions, which were either of a nature quite repugnant to the circumstances of modern Europe, or that betrayed gross ignorance of the essential elements of republicanism on the part of the writer. His followers went so far as to detest all kingly power and nobility; in other words, they treated the old economy of states and of society with gross contempt; although Montesquieu had historically proved the value of feudal institutions, and had traced their characteristics with great ability. The progress of recent times in profounder historical criticism proves the frequent and serious misrepresentations that were thus made of historical truths, and of all the past. For when the philosophy of the eighteenth century had entirely annihilated itself: and religion—which had all along been the object of its attack—instead of being destroyed, had triumphantly emerged from the contest, the history of the past resumed its natural appearance. Yet not a few falsifications, errors, and prejudices still remain to be remedied. In no other department of human knowledge was the philosophy of the last century able to establish its influence, or root itself so deeply and so extensively as in history, in which false motives are likely to be less apparent to the reader who does not examine for himself, than when they openly court attention in the shape of philosophic doctrines and opinions.

There are, moreover, certain personal considerations in Voltaire's case tending to narrow the scope of his historical views. He makes little secret of styling all ages antecedent to Louis XIV. ages of darkness, and of representing all nations, except his own, mere hordes of barbarians. The part which that highly lauded monarch had to enact in Voltaire's drama of life and history accordingly consisted in being the first to pronounce the fiat, *Let there be Light!* over the

chaotic barbarism of preceding ages and nations. Yet the great writers in the time of Louis, including Locke and Newton, are only considered and extolled as the first streaks of dawning light. The noonday sun of splendid enlightenment and liberty of thought being unquestionably understood by Voltaire to have made its appearance at a period somewhat nearer to his own day. But however much he was inclined to flatter the vanity of his countrymen, yet there were moments of spleen and discontent in which he did not scruple to vent his bitterness against them; as, for instance, in his well-known saying that the French character was a compound of the tiger and the monkey: this lampoon one might easily be tempted to apply to himself. So impossible did it seem for his caustic spirit to treat of any subject or circumstance whatever with reverence and enduring seriousness! By nurturing its vanity he gave a wrong direction to his country's energies; nor did the evil effects of such misdirection begin to disappear until France entered into natural and just relations with other European nations, and her intellect came into active contact with theirs.

Even Montesquieu contributed to the development of this philosophy of the last century, in so far as he did not furnish his readers with any fixed standard and centre of unity, in illustration of his many excellent and ingenious political remarks. Fixed principles were not, then, common in any sphere of human action or contemplation. Hence this writer, of such distinguished genius and varied attainments, only served to augment the general confusion of ideas; since in the absence of a leading principle, the spirit of the age was tossed to and fro on the vast ocean of political acquirements and fancies, like a bark on the waves without compass or anchor.

Inducements to elevated thought and feeling, even to religious impressions, are scattered broad-cast throughout nature with almost lavish profusion, so that we need scarcely be surprised that many French naturalists of note took no part in the prevailing irreligious views of the period, or if somewhat entangled in their meshes, ever and anon soared to loftier contemplations. Buffon appears to have been one of this number: some of his opinions are, indeed, irreconcileable with revealed religion, others will not stand the test of

philosophic investigation, whilst he himself was not altogether free from the material fetters that then confined all physical inquiry. Yet, with regard to his intellect and natural religious sentiment, he may be classed, at least comparatively, with the best thinkers of the eighteenth century; of later names, I will here only allude to the honest zeal of Bonnet.

The social economy of modern Europe, and especially of France, was in many respects so far alienated from nature that it was perhaps pardonable for a restless, curious, and inquiring spirit to pass to the opposite extreme. At the same time, Rousseau's example is an instance of the insufficiency of the mere admiration and worship of nature, to serve as an unerring guide to conduct and life generally. In regard to animated enthusiasm and zeal, Rousseau far surpasses not only Voltaire but all other French philosophers of the eighteenth century, standing, as it were, alone in this respect. Nevertheless, the influence he exercised over his nation and age was perhaps even more noxious. When a vigorous mind passionately devotes its best energies to the inquiry after Truth, and being unable to find her on a wrong track seizes upon error instead of truth, then, indeed, error possesses fatal and terrible properties, and has power to seduce many a noble heart deficient in firmness of principle. Voltaire's wit materially assisted in shaking this firmness, as well as the old foundations of faith and morality; thus he paved the way for Rousseau, whose fiery eloquence dragged down into the vortex those who would never have yielded to the mere sophistry of wit. Rousseau's picture of a rude state of nature, and his theory of a pure democracy founded on unassisted human reason, may well be supposed to have at first produced a greater degree of astonishment than of conviction. As he had succeeded, however, in originating a new epoch and method of education, which was soon generally adopted, and which consisted of an isolated natural development of the individual mind, without any positive faith whatever, and irrespective of the connection of individuals in social union, it cannot create surprise that in a succeeding generation the most extravagant of his political ideas, similarly based on nature, were thought feasible. Much in the same manner as the extension of physics had for the most part led to a

corrupted morality, to attacks on faith, or even distinct denial of God, so also increased knowledge of mankind was turned to manifold perverse uses in the course of the eighteenth century. Rousseau was enthusiastic in his admiration of savages, and in this had many followers. Yet, how much soever travellers' descriptions of American and other savages were embellished and rendered attractive for the purpose of furnishing the ideal of a truly inartificial state of nature, the custom of eating human flesh, prevalent among various races of cannibals, served in some degree to moderate the enthusiasm of this school; until the age, emancipated from all prejudices, advanced so far in its peculiar progress, that the above custom lost some of its repulsiveness among those new cannibals, the offspring of the Revolution.

Voltaire, and several French writers after him, evince an equally strong predilection for the other extreme, far enough removed from the wild freedom of savages,—I mean the Chinese, whose monotonous social arrangements may be justly said to be "the Despotism of Reason." To an age which was increasingly desirous of substituting an efficient police for a religion that had sunk into contempt, and for moral feeling; an age which was ambitious of attaining to perfection in certain manufactures, as the highest destiny of human society, while it virtually declared the very acme of refinement to consist of so-called pure morals, solely and simply referring to the strict observance of police-regulations and to the diffusion of manufacturing industry: to such an age, was unspeakably pleasing a nation that assumed to have had pure morals without religion for thousands of years, and to have printed newspapers for centuries prior to Europeans; a nation, moreover, that painted on porcelain in exquisite colours and prepared that important article paper, of a much thinner and finer texture than any produced in Europe. It were, indeed, deplorable if modern Europe, after having learned from actual experiment that certain customs of the Caribbee Islanders are hardly practicable in the present state of society, were compelled to gather from experience also, that the Despotism of Reason, involved in Chinese uniformity of state and social policy, is by no means congenial to humanity or even just in itself.

Voltaire and Rousseau were the first and principal guides to the philosophy of the eighteenth century: others materially co-operated to advance the spirit of the times further in the path selected for its course, and to develop with more definite principles and bolder consequences the philosophy of sense suggested by Locke. How far their efforts were successful may be seen in the case of Helvetius, who, when he depicted selfishness, vanity, and sensual pleasures as the genuine all-determining springs and realities of life, and declared that they constituted the only reasonable aims of enlightened man, was merely reported to have disclosed the universal secret of the world. According to this doctrine, mind does not distinguish man from the lower animals—but his hands and fingers—a distinction which, of course, the ape, in some degree, shares with man. Some philosophers, indeed, went so far as to question the actual difference between man and the ape; and the possibility of gradual transition in their formation was seriously discussed. It is to be regretted that Rousseau was induced, from personal motives, to abandon his original intention of openly attacking the tenets of Helvetius. Such a dispute would, from its very nature, have led him to a more precise development of his own principles of thought, which could not but have been of great advantage. For, with much that was pernicious, his philosophy contained the germs of much that was good and noble; and his writings, when correctly analysed, will be found to contain not a few remarks that his opponents and critics are wont rather to use than to acknowledge. He thoroughly disapproved of the sensuous philosophy then in vogue; with his whole soul he detested that false science. Though he was never successful in attaining to the truth, yet he enunciated much that then seemed startling paradox, but which, from our religious point of view, sounds like an echo of the truth from amid the confusion of universal error. Pity that his loftier intellectual aspirations were never really developed or turned into the right direction! He stood alone in solitary contemplation: ever and anon, when on the track of glorious truth, some fanciful notion in the shape of nature-worship, misled his footsteps. His spirit, constantly agitated by opposing influences, enjoyed no internal repose. Of all who erred, and erred so deeply, during that eventful

period, he is the only one who inspires us with deep regret.

Diderot marks the last step in the career of French philosophy prior to the Revolution. It may be assumed to be generally understood that he constituted the actual centre and essence, so to speak, not of the *Encyclopédie* only, but likewise of the *Systeme de la Nature*, and many other works written in a similar spirit, and virtually atheistic in character. He worked in secret rather than openly, and differed from Voltaire and Rousseau in being free from literary vanity, and mainly directing his energies to the success of his cause. His animating principle consisted in downright fanatical hatred not merely of Christianity but of every species of religion. The favourite views entertained by this school are that all religion is mere superstition and the result of fortuitous circumstances; taking its rise in the terror with which great physical changes, of which the traces are still visible, inspired the survivors of a half-destroyed race. Several treatises in the interests of this party do not scruple to use the term *atheism*, and undisguisedly maintain that the universal adoption of atheism is essential to the unalloyed happiness of the human family. But wherever this theory has been reduced to practice it has proved to be a fallacy. The most unnatural abortion of this atheistical system is the well-known mythological interpretation of Christianity, according to which Christ is only an astronomical symbol, having no historical existence, the twelve Apostles corresponding with the signs of the Zodiac. A complete Pagan system having been deduced from physical science, history having been thoroughly corrupted in all its several periods, no further enormity remained to be perpetrated than to summon Pagan mythology and give it this anti-Christian application, in order that universal history might be wholly despoiled of its corner-stone, and that its centre-point might be converted into idle fable and ingenious allegory. The ideas generated by this system, together with their practical effects on life itself, are to be gathered from the well-known wish definitely expressed previous to the revolutionary outbreak, namely—*That the last king might be strangled with the bowels of the last priest!*

LECTURE XIV

LIGHTER PRODUCTIONS OF THE FRENCH, AND IMITATION OF THE ENGLISH.—FASHIONABLE LITERATURE IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.—MODERN ROMANCE.—PROSE OF ROUSSEAU AND BUFFON.—LAMARTINE.—ENGLISH POPULAR POETRY.—SCOTT AND BYRON.—MODERN THEATRE OF THE ITALIANS.—ENGLISH CRITICISM AND HISTORY.—SCEPTICISM AND MORAL BELIEF.—RETURN TO A PURER AND LOFTIER PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE.—BONALD AND ST. MARTIN, LAMENNAIS AND DE MAISTRE.—SIR WILLIAM JONES AND BURKE.

THE lighter literature of France has been continuously and richly endowed with genial productions of imagination and wit since the period of Louis XIV. Still, even in these, the palm of success must needs be awarded to earlier times. None of the later scenic poets can vie with Moliere in comic humour: Lafontaine's own peculiar grace displayed in elaborate artlessness of poetic narrative, still remains inimitable. Voltaire, whose philosophy altogether inclined to modern tastes which he was one of the first to prompt and direct, is connected by his poetry and literature with an older period, and thus constitutes a transition-point and link of union. His comic dramas are far inferior to his tragedies: but he surpassed all his competitors in manifold variety of witty fugitive poetry. And this was the peculiar direction taken by minor poetry in France at this time: a tone of social wit gradually became dominant, whilst in England lyric verse was characterized by a depth of thought and tone of natural feeling in description. In proportion as poetry identifies herself with social life and with the present hour, she becomes subject to local influence and the tyranny of fashion. Many comedies, romances, and social poems, dating from the close of the seventeenth, or the commencement of the eighteenth century, of a genial character and highly popular in their day, are now thoroughly obsolete in respect to the

manners and spirit which they pourtray. Were the poetic literature of a nation entirely restricted to the representation of modern subjects—for instance, dramatic portraiture of national habits, narrative drawn from social life, and witty occasional poetry—it would scarcely be either necessary or possible to draw up a critical history of its contents; any more than the minute ephemera of a summer evening can be made the subject of anatomical examination. It would then serve no other purpose than that of filling up the leisure hours of social relaxation, and though feeling and passion were occasionally aroused, or a fine idea added here and there, in order to avoid tedious repetition, the chief aim would still be to amuse; and this could be effected quite as well without the aid of poetry.

I would not be understood to say that some of the lighter kinds of poetry are not equally impressed by the stamp of genius with the more serious efforts of nobler minstrels. Yet the beauty of the former is rarely so universal, frequently resting altogether on a delicacy of expression that can be more easily felt than described. The beauties of an epic poem or a tragedy may be felt even when transferred to a foreign idiom, and they suffer less by such a transmutation in proportion to their intrinsic excellence. I very much question whether any foreigner, however conversant with the idiomatic peculiarities of the French language, can ever realize the unlimited admiration of Lafontaine entertained by his own countrymen. Any one may appreciate his naiveté, his grace, his genius; but a Frenchman alone feels and admires much more than all this—a certain charm inherent in his expression which it is not possible for any foreigner to discover. Some of Moliere's happiest and most characteristic creations are now too antiquated for living representation on the stage, and can only be admired in perusal. However highly they are ranked and justly ranked, as individual creations of French poetry, they are not felicitous models for the imitation of posterity. The characters of Labruyere, if dramatized, are not therefore poetry. If the rhetoric of the passions, when holding exclusive sway in tragedy, by no means satisfies the requirements of its loftier destiny, the psychological analysis of character and passion in comedy is a far less competent substitute for poetry and wit. This

psychological tendency of the higher French drama in the eighteenth century has often been made a matter of reproach. It suggested an easy transition to those moral treatises usurping the form of comedy, invented by Diderot, to our lasting misfortune.

The original French character was no doubt quite as airy and jocund as it is commonly depicted: but this careless merry humour is nowhere reflected in the literature of the eighteenth century, even in cases where it would have been most fittingly introduced. This is to be attributed to an ever-extending spirit of sectarianism, political no less than philosophical: the current of events sufficiently explains the manner in which the rhetoric of the passions gradually assumed complete ascendancy over the olden merry poetry of France, and thus the national character obviously underwent essential changes during the eighteenth century. The dominant sensuous philosophy may, indeed, be supposed to have corresponded with the free jocular verse of some few poets, but it also carried many beyond the bounds of poetry. Materialism is, essentially, unpropitious to poetry, and deadening to the fancy. Whosoever is once fully imbued with the doctrines of Helvetius will be thenceforth deaf to all the witchery of the muse.

On the other hand, the impatience of restraint and the worship of nature, which Rousseau's followers more especially deduced from the new philosophy, were in manifest contradiction to the regularity of older French verse cultivated during the seventeenth century. Hence arose a secret inner spirit of opposition, a continuous effort to be disenthralled; this state of things soon brought about an open rebellion of taste, foreshadowing the greater political outbreak. Hence the predilection for English poetry. Voltaire made frequent use of it in secret, whilst he was busily engaged in openly aspersing it. In all higher efforts of the muse, this English influence is especially apparent, even down to our own times. The various attempts made to confer more freedom on the movements of tragedy, and enrich its historical import, without at the same time utterly demolishing the fabric of its older structure, have to this day remained incomplete, without any definite result whatever. The most recent performances in the more elevated

regions of poetry, that are accounted classic productions, are descriptions of natural scenery, appertaining to a species pre-eminently English. Romance, accordingly, grew to be a favourite mode of composition with those whose enthusiasm for nature found no vent in any of the older existing forms: for it was exempt from all those fetters that cramped aspiring effort in other departments of poetry. When Voltaire clothed his wit and philosophy in this form, when Rousseau made it the depository of his enthusiasm and eloquence, or Diderot used it as the vehicle of his wayward petulance, Romance became in the hands of these men of genius exactly what each of them wished. The two former writers were followed by a host of others, who sought to embody a similar spirit in more regular narrative selected from every-day life. I need not do more on this occasion than recall to recollection romances breathing the very spirit of Voltaire, as manifested in his Candide. Others attached themselves more peculiarly to Rousseau: fired by at least equal enthusiastic love of nature, Bernardin de St. Pierre and Chateaubriand transported their imaginative faculties to the savage wilds of America, where they were sheltered from the rigour of those two inexorable tyrants of their native country, Aristotle and Boileau.

Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot made a frequent and arbitrary use of romance, as being a form eminently adapted to the conveyance of certain peculiar ideas of their own. But if this form be regarded as a distinct poetic species, as regular narrative in prose, sketching the transient features of society, it will be found that, in this respect, too, French writers have frequently copied from English models, but have seldom, if ever, equalled them. In point of originality and power of representation Richardson perhaps occupies the highest place in this peculiar style of composition. If he, likewise, has become antiquated, if his striving after the ideal was not attended with special success owing to exactness of details occasionally tedious, we have a proof of the incompatibility of direct poetic connexion with the hard realities of life, though disguised in prosaic garb. If his genius availed not to solve the problem, it was because its solution was little short of impracticable. Of the imitators of Cervantes, Fielding and Smollett still remain the most

accomplished; whilst among short and simple narratives, life-like miniatures of this species of art, the *Vicar of Wakefield* claims a foremost rank. Sterne founded another and a different species, in which description holds a secondary position, the principal being occupied in playful humour, sentiment, and wit.

If the productions of mind, subservient to fashion and every-day necessities, may be judged by the same standard as the fashionable commodities, I should be tempted to give the preference, in point of neat and finished character, to English romances generally over those of France.

Another feature in French literature unfavourable to the perfect development of romance is its extraordinary store of historic memoirs, autobiographies, attractive collections of anecdotes and letters, all of which approximate, more or less, to a romantic character. I am not aware that any of Marmontel's tales ever created so general a sensation as his Memoirs; and what French romance is there that could, by any possibility, compare in thrilling interest with Rousseau's Confessions?

French poetry, as a whole, was supplanted by prose in the course of the eighteenth century: notwithstanding individual glaring imperfections, the latter attained to a height of polished eloquence under the hands of certain leading writers. Voltaire's prose style is spirited and witty like himself: thoroughly suited to his genius and design. His language is not, I believe, considered worthy of imitation by the more rigid critics of his country, and his historical method is certainly not. Diderot's style and manner are engaging in the eyes of some Germans, inasmuch as he is imbued with a degree of æsthetic feeling for the beauties of imitative art: a feature rarely, if at all, distinguishable in French authors generally. His language, however, is capricious and incorrect, nor is it embellished with that pure elegance that may reasonably be expected to characterise the best French writers. The style of Buffon and Rousseau is most admired as a specimen of masterly delineation and consummate rhetoric. The former is perhaps the more artistic in point of detail and in the structure of periods; but these qualities are marred by a defect incidental to the nature of his work. I allude to his numerous episodes, in which he

takes occasion to introduce his thoughts or rhetorical passages where they were not called for. It may not seem unnatural in him to interweave his theory of love with his article on *doves*. But a dissertation on the migration of nations is somewhat out of place in a chapter on *the hare*. Aristotle permitted himself no such digressions in his capacity of natural historian; in strict appropriateness of detail coupled with lucid distinctness of scientific style, Buffon is far inferior to the Greek master whom it was his fond ambition to emulate. I accordingly concur with those who give Rousseau the preference, since his art is less isolated and disjointed than that of Buffon: and rhetorical unity, though not very strictly regulated, is more apparent throughout his writings. Hence he is all the more captivating. But whilst I cordially agree with those who pronounce Rousseau to have been the first French author of the eighteenth century in point of artistic and powerful expression, I cannot dissent from those who see an immense interval between his captivating eloquence and the sublime grandeur of Bossuet.

If the present relations of literature are ever to undergo a change—that is, if the preponderating influence of French prose is to decline, or, at least, be diminished by the revival of French poetry—my opinion is that such a revival cannot be effected by any imitation of English standards, as has heretofore been attempted, nor indeed by any external causes, but rather by a recurrence to the poetic spirit of the country in the olden time. Imitation of the genius of another nation can never conduce to the attainment of the object in view, for the several circumstances that have combined to elevate their art must of necessity be foreign to imitators. It is incumbent on every nation to recur to its own original and primitive legendary poetry. The nearer this source is arrived at, the more distinctly conspicuous are the poetic features common to all nations. The poetic legends of all races are as intimately connected with their origin as themselves. The pure spring of religious inspiration is to all minds an inexhaustible source, out of whose depths poetry gushes forth in living streams. From this source Lamartine drew his poetical compositions which form the beginning of a new poetical era for France.

English verse, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, still leaned on French taste, the influence of which is visible in Pope's elaborate versification, as well as in Addison's attempt in so-called regular tragedy. Meanwhile, both of them assisted in rescuing Shakspere and Milton from temporary oblivion. Pope's translation of Homer, though very remote from the simplicity of the old bard, still served to increase the general predilection for the great poet of nature and antiquity, and is itself a proof of this strong predilection. Pope's original poems manifest that predominating tendency to poetic reflection which gradually rendered the didactic form of composition a favourite in England, and produced such a host of efforts in the same direction. It has been previously remarked that this species is in its nature cold and anti-poetical. English example affords no exception to the rule of its speedy exhaustion. Contemplation was frequently overshadowed by pathetic melancholy, as in the wild but beautiful effusions of Young's "Night Thoughts." With a more tempered beauty Thomson expressed the ardour of his natural feeling in a poem peculiar to the English description of nature, a species that met with many imitators abroad. It was this love of nature that gained Ossian so many admirers: and though not always marked by Ossian's plaintive melancholy or Young's pensive sadness, the lyrical poesy of England was certainly distinguished by a peculiar spirit of earnest contemplation in the eighteenth century in a much greater degree than that of France. Along with the veneration for Shakspere, Percy excited a passionate love for the old ballads and popular songs. The more of these were discovered, especially those of Scotland, the more does this poetic species appear to have supplanted all other kinds, the every-day requirements of romance and the drama alone excepted. Thus, whilst higher poetry began in France, towards the close of the seventeenth century, with the observance of strict and somewhat arbitrary rules, and gradually sunk into the tone of social wit; it commenced in England with serious reflection or descriptions of natural scenery, and ended in a general taste for early ballads, echoes of the lost minstrelsy of an earlier age. Of late years, since the re-establishment of familiar intercourse with England, the fame of two British poets has reached

the Continent, representing the poetic feeling of our time in a distinct and characteristic manner. The muse of Scott lives only in reminiscences of the old songs of Scotland; his verse is, as it were, a mosaic composed of detached fragments of romantic legend and early chivalry adapted to Scottish customs, and knit together with wondrous skill and care: just as fragmentary portions of paintings on glass out of Gothic churches are sometimes found in country houses and hermitages at the present day, neatly cemented together for the sake of picturesque effect. The poetry of Byron issues neither from reminiscence nor hope, but from the depths of tragic inspiration and a peculiarly disconsolate atheistic philosophy. His verse, with all its lofty aspirations and endowments, is lost in the mazes of infidelity and despair: groping in a vast crowd of strange unearthly shapes conjured up by midnight fancy, it deifies only a morbid heroism, which it invests with the gloomy spell of varied passion. This atheistic inspiration was not altogether alien to German poetry at an earlier epoch; but a purer sphere was soon attained, the monstrosities of false tragic grandeur being banished to the extreme confines of the drama. In the higher regions of art it was speedily discovered that modern poetry cannot flow in transparent stream from the turbid eddy of froward passion; but, founded on eternal hope, it must become a glorified admixture of Faith and Love, radiant as the rainbow after the storm, or the dawn of morn after the shades of night. Scott and Byron, together constituting the poetry of reminiscence and the poetry of despair, may be said to form the close of a former extinct minstrelsy, rather than the commencement of a new era, of which as yet there are no manifest tokens.

Upon the whole, poetry was considerably on the decline, during the eighteenth century, in most countries, as contrasted with the rich stores of former days; even in those lands where the mode of life is in its very nature poetical, as in Spain, as well as in those where all the national characteristics are entwined with song, as in Italy. The latter, though unable to shew any splendid productions in exalted verse, at this period, such as might enter into competition with its earlier glories has yet evinced great activity in manifold dramatic development. The perform-

ances of Metastasio, Goldoni, Gozzi, Alfieri, singly display all the elements of scenic poesy, generally found united in the finished dramas that have possession of our own stage. Metastasio is celebrated for the highest degree of melodious expression; Goldoni depicts ordinary life easily and agreeably, his characters and masques being after genuine Italian fashion; Gozzi's fantastic extravaganzas, while replete with really poetic invention, lack musical perfection and imaginative embellishment, which can, alone, give due effect to their poetical contents; Alfieri's aspirations after antique sublimity merit the praise bestowed on laudable efforts even when falling short of complete success.

I know not whether the modern English drama is not quite as superior to that of France as its romances are; both are poetical manufactures, and the English seems to be the best of the two. We are more interested in the Italian theatre on account of its closer similarity to our own, as regards the phenomena of external circumstances and late development.

English criticism on poetry, as also on creative art generally, was more independent, original, and imbued with archæology than that of France, and therefore more in conformity with the German spirit. Still German criticism derived only a primary impulse from suggestions thrown out by Harris, Home, Hurd, and Warton, and soon attained to an independent development scarcely equalled, perhaps, by any other branch of our literature.

The great standards of historical composition which England produced during the eighteenth century are among the most important features of belles lettres. In this species of literature they have surpassed all other nations, if only in leading the way, and as historical models for foreign imitation. Unless I am mistaken, Hume ranks with the foremost in this department. But however great a safeguard scepticism may be in the process of historic investigation of facts, in which it can hardly be carried to excess, yet if the effects of doubting be to attack, to shake, nay, utterly to demolish the great bulwark of moral and religious principles, it little becomes the historian of a powerful nation, who aims at exercising permanent and extensive influence.

Narrow principles, views not perfectly correct are, in this case, much better and more productive than a deadening want of sentiment, feeling, and love. A tendency to opposition to prevalent opinions, a leaning to paradox, are all that remain to invest history, when framed after this manner, with any degree of interest. Now such a tendency to opposition is unmistakeable in Hume. In his time, the republican spirit of the Whigs biassed English literature almost as completely as it now does, and with equally doubtful influence on the country's welfare. How salutary soever, then, it may have seemed to him to abandon the prevalent Anglican severity of party and, attaching himself to the Opposition, to tinge a most important part of the national annals with evident predilection for the unfortunate house of Stuart and sympathy with Tory principles, he can only be regarded as an eminent party-historian, the first in his peculiar method and view, not the truly great author of a performance at once national in spirit and in genius. His description of earlier times is very unsatisfactory: having no affection for them, he could not sufficiently realize them. Robertson's style is most attractive: his language select, and, though ornate, yet lucid and unaffected. His weak side is that which has regard to research and import, certainly the most important of all historic qualities. It is now universally admitted, even in England, that he is unreliable, superficial, and often full of errors as to facts: yet his style is wont to be held up as a pattern, owing, probably, to the degeneracy of taste. But even his style is, in my opinion, too verbose and antithetical. Fine writing and an attempt at artistic rhetorical treatment of History throughout are calculated, as I conceive, to lead to injudicious results. If history is to be treated as an art, it will be difficult indeed for any modern nation to equal or even come near to the perfection of the ancients. It is more possible to excel them in another way; namely, by treating history rather as a science, to which end our improved materials and increased resources cannot fail to avail us. Keeping this in view, that style will be found best adapted to the purpose which shall combine simplicity, care, appropriateness, with lucidity, absence of superfluous words, and of artificial far-fetched ornament. Gibbon is copious in reflections: his style is, in detail, particularly excellent, but he is

too uniformly rich in ornament. His page is replete with Latin and French idiomatic turns: owing to the mixed character of the English language which has no definite fixed boundary of speech. Gibbon's artificial half-Latin manner was more especially introduced by Johnson: in principle, at least, the English have partially given it up, as doing violence to the genius of their language. As regards internal merit, whilst copious and attractive, he is, nevertheless, unsatisfactory: owing to the absence of right feeling, and the presence of Voltaire's spirit of mockery at religion, at all times unworthy of a historian, and not even easy or natural in Gibbon, since it militates against his laboured elegance of expression, and seems an awkward attempt at witticism. But in spite of the deficiencies I have mentioned, these three leading English historians, the first of their respective kinds, are deservedly held in high esteem, appearing the more meritorious when contrasted with some of their successors. It is only necessary to compare Roscoe, with all his richness of Italian lore, yet dry and methodical, with Gibbon; Coxe attractive and interesting, yet less lofty and classical in his style, with Robertson; or Fox, the statesman, with Hume; to ascertain the declining condition of historical science in England. One of the causes of the declension is perhaps the want of a fixed and satisfactory system of philosophy: this is sensibly felt to have operated even in the case of those three historical models. Without some definite perception of the moral existence of man, his origin and his destination, the historian is hardly competent to decide, or even clearly understand, all the circumstances relative to national events, developments, and fortunes. Upon the whole, History and Philosophy ought ever to be as closely united as possible. If wholly disjoined from history, and devoid of a spirit of criticism resulting from a junction of the two, Philosophy can scarcely hope to attain to anything higher than fierce sectarianism or empty formulæ: since, in the former case, it misconstrues the temper of the times, and for want of due discrimination makes havoc of their general features: in the latter, it takes no interest whatever in man's existence and actions. Without the animating principle of philosophy, history is but a senseless heap of waste materials, destitute of inner unity, fixity of purpose, or definite result. The want

of satisfactory convictions and principles is nowhere more strikingly evinced than in the so-called history of man, which formed a favourite subject of inquiry in England, and was thence transplanted to Germany. An immense number of travels and voyages were laid under contribution to furnish matter for pictures of the fisher, the hunter, the migratory races, and different conditions of agricultural, commercial, and domestic life. This was called a history of man: and no doubt many individual observations of considerable value were thus brought together; even the connexion with physical and natural views of man according to the variety of his stock and outward appearance—white or swarthy, copper-coloured or yellow. But detached observations of this kind only realize an actual value in proportion as they illustrate the loftier connexion of the whole. So long, however, as this unity was wanting, what chance was there of a reasonable solution of the question, which alone constitutes a genuine history of man: namely, his actual nature, his original condition and mode of life, and the reason of his fall to that comparatively deplorable state in which we now see him? The answer to this strictly historical question, forming the beginning and the end of all history, is to be found only in religion and philosophy—that Christian philosophy whose sole aim and endeavour are bent upon thoroughly understanding religion. As soon as history quits the limited circle described by the existing traditions and events of various races and ages, and casts longing glances at humanity as a collective whole, the fundamental philosophy of revelation is alone able to afford correct interpretation of its meaning, and a guide to the right path: otherwise there will be constant danger of viewing mankind, in the several stages of development, as a mere natural production. The Divine disposal of mundane affairs, in the sequence of different periods and historical eras, can be comprehended only in the depths of spiritual perception. In a word, the necessary connexion of profane with sacred history—in its beginning, middle, and end—is alone to be gathered, in a lucid and satisfactory manner, from spiritual Christian views. The spurious history of mankind, which characteristically proceeded from the corrupt sensual material philosophy prevalent in the eighteenth century, is based upon a belief

that man grew out of the ground like a mushroom, but with the additional properties of locomotion and consciousness. According to the same theory, the formation of these properties was the work of ages; and what was particularly aimed at in similar histories was to analyze the gradual development of intelligence and spirit, of art and science, from the regions of the animal kingdom step by step. The more minutely the connexion between man and the orang-outang—a favourite with many philosophers of the age—was traced, the more deeply philosophical the inquiry was supposed to be. Surrounded, as we are, by boundless wealth of materials and resources, of ancient records, of geographical and other treasures, and able to take a retrospective glance at many centuries, we are in the very position to treat the history of the world as a science, in the real acceptation of the word; within whose vast boundaries political history, too, might be made to assume a totally new complexion. But in order to erect a structure such as this, the vast array of materials at our command should be raised on the old theological foundations, and well cemented, which, as yet, has not been done. The various histories of man hitherto in vogue were built on the yielding sand of unassisted rational hypothesis or natural observation, cemented by a sensuous philosophy. But history as an art, and as first and most extensively practised in England in modern times, has only produced rhetorical master-pieces destitute of genuine science.

The philosophy of sensation unwittingly suggested by Bacon, and first reduced to actual principles by Locke, which in France led to immoral and destructive consequences, established a distinct sect, and eventually terminated in complete and extensively diffused atheism, took a different turn in England. Similar results could not well attend it in that country: the universal feeling of national welfare and of its concomitants, which would evidently have been imperilled by the spread of such doctrines as obtained in France, would have been repugnant to its systematic progress. The English spirit is, moreover, naturally inclined to seize on the paradoxical and sceptical rather than on the material and atheistical views of the philosophy in question. It will be remembered that Berkeley was induced to entertain

the strangest notions in consequence of pursuing Locke's system: inasmuch as he was desirous of blending his religious belief with the tenets of Locke, whilst the former was too deeply rooted to admit of thorough eradication. The difficulty that seemed incomprehensible to philosophers of that day—and necessarily so—was to explain the mind's apprehension and knowledge of external objects. For all that we perceive and feel in external creation is after all a mere impression effecting some variation in ourselves. Examine it as we choose, we receive the impression of the object, not the object itself, which seems continually to elude our grasp. If we consider nature as animate, or at least as a means, an instrument, a visible Word of Life, all confusion is removed, and light breaks in upon us. It cannot be unintelligible to our faculties that two living, mutually operating, spiritual natures, are acted upon by a third apparently inanimate medium and instrument, namely, speech or language which serves in the capacity of a connecting medium. This is felt every moment of our existence; we neither live nor move, nor at any time commune with ourselves, unless through the instrumentality of words. But this plain conviction, namely: that the sensible world is merely the habitation of the intellectual, and a medium of separation as well as of connection between spiritual natures, was lost sight of; and with it a due appreciation of intellect and an animating assurance of its existence. Thus the philosophy of sense first transgressed its principles, and, passing over the most essential questions and solutions, fell from one degree of confusion into another. Berkeley proceeded so far as to deny the utter existence of external objects, and held that God was the direct prompter of our several notions and impressions; oppressed by similar doubts, Hume adopted a view altogether different—a sceptical view which, thrown into dismay by the law of inextricable doubt, at last denied the certainty of all knowledge. His all-pervading and destructive scepticism determined the course of English philosophy. Since his day, nothing further has been effected in this department of inquiry than strenuous efforts to arrest pernicious influences, tending to sap the very foundations of moral order and to uphold the fabric of necessary convictions by means of various bulwarks. The

dominant idea of national welfare was not confined to Adam Smith, but constitutes the chief point, the centre, and invisible regulator of collective English philosophy. Yet, however laudable and proper continual reference to this paramount centre point undoubtedly is, this idea, of itself, by no means suffices as a decisive oracle in all matters of knowledge and science. Such supports are, at the best, frail and feeble, and ill-calculated to endure even for the practical purposes of life, the course of which, sooner or later, must correspond with intellectual conviction and development. In the absence of an impossible perfection of human knowledge, sound common sense and moral sympathy or conscience have been proposed as fitting substitutes. But natural common sense, even if it were always sound and universal in the degree for which credit is taken, would rather cut the Gordian knot of philosophy than untie it. But the innate curiosity of our moral nature is not to be eradicated, and the great question relative to the inner ground of knowledge and of all truth will recur, though put off ever so often. Moral sympathy or conscience alone is inadequate to the requirements of ethics; unless the immutable law of justice be superadded, and this can never be derived from mere experience or feeling, but from reason and God alone. To this end firm conviction, definite faith, is absolutely essential. Faith, however, such as English philosophers grounded on the deductions of common sense, or on the principles of morality recognized by them, or which, at any rate, were currently recognized, and on estimable feelings, is necessarily of as vacillating a nature as those foundations themselves. Such faith does not come up to our standard. Our faith is a conviction firm and unalterable as that derived from reason and outer experience, and even more so, but drawn from a very different source, and reached by another path, that of inner perception, higher revelation, and Divine tradition. The so-called faith of English philosophers is a fabricated self-doubting faith of necessity, as little calculated to stand in the hour of danger as the lifeless confessional faith of the unreflecting. We have here the melancholy example of a nation energetic and free in all its life and action, in poetry given to profundity rather than to mere transitory externals, fettered by its philosophy in self-constructed chains; so that under its

dominion the national genius has of late years achieved less original development, and appears to possess less thoroughness. than what characterizes some of the leading writers among the French. If it be the case that there are instances of English philosophers who have trodden devious paths of their own, diverging from the main road I have been describing, they have, for the most part, exercised no important general influence: nor am I acquainted with any such attempts calling for special notice.

Thus, English philosophy may be likened to a man having a hale and healthy look whilst the germs of some fatal malady lie within him, which, being checked by palliatives in the first instance, has been only driven back into the system. Just as in the body politic, the seeds of revolutionary commotion were never yet entirely extinguished in England, but are kept down and distributed in infinitesimal particles by the ingenious equilibrium of its wonderful constitution: so in the domains of intellect, decided materialism or the destructive spirit of unconditional scepticism has been hitherto restrained, by certain moral palliatives or checks, from alarming results of a general and extensive character. But it can hardly be expected that the disease of philosophic error and irreligion is to be cured by any appliance short of a radical internal remedy: and in this kind of practice, too, it is to be feared that long-continued chronic disorder is no less dangerous in its debilitating consequences than acute illness. I therefore consider it highly probable, nay, almost certain, that an important crisis still impends over the philosophy and, as necessarily connected with it, over the moral and religious mind of England.

Leaving immediate and practical results out of view, and regarding only the inner development of mind, one would be almost inclined to hold complete and open error to be less perilous than when half-disguised. In the latter case, hidden danger lurks beneath insidious self-deception: whilst the intellect rebounds the more freely from extreme tension, and rises from the abyss of error in which it has sunk with so much greater strength and vigour.

France witnessed a similar and very remarkable return to truth and genuine philosophy. When the altars, so recently dedicated to Reason, the goddess of the age, was personated

by an actress, perhaps more truthfully than her devotees suspected, were purified and once more consecrated to sound religion—and when the new church, destitute of all fixed creed, and styling itself Theo-philanthropy, was likewise dissolved—the voice of suppressed truth resounded from all parts. I am not now alluding exclusively to the distinguished writer who devoted the whole of his splendid and exuberant eloquence to the cause of religion. For though it was laudable, reasonable, and directly essential to the best interests of France of that day, that Chateaubriand should especially depict the lovely and beneficent effects of Christianity, yet he stopped short at its external manifestation and splendour, and did not penetrate the depths of its inner spiritual essence. Since then, Lamennais has treated the subject with much greater depth: his happiest efforts are those in which, with fervent piety, he reflects the light and fulness of faith. He is less successful when engaged in a contest to which his powers are inadequate, namely, the attempting to base the law of faith on the annihilation of all science, as Kant, Jacobi, and their adherents previously attempted in Germany, though only in a metaphysical point of view; so that in reference to this he unconsciously appears as a disciple of Kant, but with Catholic views. Yet, it can surely be no longer consistent with French interests to attack science with the hostile and destructive weapons of Rousseau's impassioned eloquence; let us rather trust we are nearer the time when genuine science, profiting by the dissolution of its spurious opponent and thoroughly penetrated with the truths of religion, may effect a lasting reconciliation with it, and henceforth minister to its increased glory. Count de Maistre, well versed as he is in the profounder secrets of philosophy, and one who has deeply studied the Catholic cause, is nearer to this goal than any other ultra-writer. We may easily pardon his misconception of the German mind.

There were yet other means by which the philosophy of the age was sought to be extended, and a loftier system founded in France. French writers of eminent talents and attainments devoted their energies to naturalize the spirit of German inquiry in their own country. Among these, the first rank is occupied by that gifted authoress who

endured so much in outward life, and whose mental conflicts were so severe; who depicted the revolution, the times and the actors, with inimitable genius and in a manner more intelligible to France than any other writer.* But many obstacles seemed to stand in the way of another of her attempts, to which she devoted all the powers of her extraordinary genius, namely,—that of rendering the art and science of Germany accessible to French students. Partial failure may be attributed to too comprehensive a plan which took the entire range of literature, instead of being at first restricted to the most necessary and essential doctrines of philosophy.

But here, taking France as a whole, another obstacle presented itself, inasmuch as the intellectual development could not be separated from the religious; and the entire German literature as well as German philosophy, especially at this period, had a decided Protestant colouring which, in the actual state of France, must have been unfavourable to its reception. The first expounders of the German mind and German science, gave a too exclusive Protestant character to their literary undertaking, which, though in accordance with their personal standing, was but one-sided. Time only can remedy this violent separation; the better class of French writers, I mean those who unite sound philosophy with religion, will one day be aware what a treasure of materials, what aids and new organs, exist even in the Catholic mind of Germany. Harmony in philosophy and religion, and communion in it, can only flourish among different nations when each is in a state of harmony within itself. Unquestionably, an increase of partial illumination from without cannot lead to this issue as long as the higher truth and firm conviction does not exist at the centre. This cannot be effected by a mere outward conventional belief founded on political reasons. Everything depends on the progress and development of internal conviction.

Perhaps the most important and essential feature in recent French literature is the return to a higher moral purity, a Platonic Christian philosophy, which here and there, has emerged from the lowest abyss of the prevalent Atheism.

* Madame de Stael.

This renovation in some measure took place before the Revolution during the most corrupt times, but did not come into full operation until a return was made to the fixed principles of religion which had alone maintained its integrity. There were always a few right-minded thinkers standing aloof from the general corruption of the age, And I would here first name Hemsterhuys, who, though not a Frenchman by birth, yet wrote in that language, and that, too, with so much grace and harmony, and so free from affectation, that, in this respect alone, his Socratic dialogues correspond to the noble Platonic Christian philosophy which characterises the spirit of his works. There are, however, two names that, in an especial manner, mark the progress made in the direction of Christian philosophy. St. Martin, the first of these two, had both before, and during the Revolution, in a series of writings purporting to emanate from "the Unknown Philosopher," and unnoticed by the crowd, but so much the more effective with the few, re-erected the ancient system of spiritualism, which appears new in our day, unaccustomed as we long have been to serious thoughts of the Eternal. Bonald, on the other hand, the fearless opponent of the Revolution, and the profound champion of monarchy according to the old French regime, laboured to adapt the vital principles and properties of this latter to a peculiar Christian theory of statesmanship ; in his *Christian Philosophy*, his latest work, he would seem to have comprehended the idea of an eternal mediating Word, as its foundation, with tolerable precision and clearness. Both of these authors combine many excellent points with much that stands in need of improvement and correction. Their defects are attributable partly to certain predilections of their country, partly to the circumstances in which they were placed, having to contend with difficulties arising out of their own age, and being thus liable to entertain erroneous notions concerning other times and nations. National prejudice is Bonald's besetting sin, which tends to limit his usefulness in various ways: St. Martin's system seems to have suffered not indeed from contact with the meagre realities of our age, but from depressing circumstances Meanwhile, the opposition that had been charged against him to existing church government is more apparent than real, as far as he is himself

concerned. If this objection can be raised against his adherents in France or Russia with a greater show of truth, we need not be surprised thereat; for it is customary with the disciples of great men in any field of inquiry to imitate any and every quality of their master's rather than his moderation. But if St. Martin did not approve of the then existing state of his Church in all things, and especially complained of the decline of religious knowledge, he was justified, to a considerable degree, by the wild revolutionary spirit and general complexion of the age. Be this as it may, the misunderstanding is in itself blameable and calculated to obstruct those religious interests he had so sincerely at heart; inasmuch as an erroneous impression might go forth that the recognition of Divine truth is exclusively based on internal conviction and enlightenment, and may be disjoined from positive tradition and the visible Church. But at no time did St. Martin really set up any hostile opposition to genuine religious inquiry. On the contrary, he everywhere expresses a wish that the recognition of truth should become the exclusive property and instrument of religion, and be joined to the clerical office; thus exalting, rather than depreciating its value by the standard then in vogue, and which was in accordance with the tenets of that sensuous philosophy he had never ceased to combat, with unabating vigour. All this, however, concerns externals only; St. Martin's doctrine being in no case at variance with the system of Catholic belief, but rather in complete accordance with it, as his philosophy is not merely Mosaic, but truly Christian. In its peculiar species, and partly in its origin, it is connected with that Oriental Platonism which, as has previously been remarked, though proscribed from learned halls and doctrinal chairs after the Revolution, was still propagated in secret and upheld by private tradition. The most lucid and perfect representation of it throughout the range of French literature and of the present age is contained in his writings. If this author, then, cannot lay claim to the merit of having invented a new system, and if that which he accepted is in many respects defective, yet it cannot but be a remarkable circumstance that, at a time when France was wholly given up to Atheism, there appeared an obscure philosopher whose in-

dividual and undivided attention was devoted to the refutation of Atheistic doctrine, and who, in its place, established a Divine philosophy based on holy tradition; and we must rejoice to see that, amongst so many apologists of Catholicism, Count de Maistre has had the intelligence to perceive what a vast store of knowledge, if rightly applied, had hitherto remained for the service of religion.

The exertions of Bonald are scarcely less remarkable, though at first the attention they commanded was limited; whilst others, at the commencement of the century, laboured to restore religion only as a political necessity, and a national creed, this learned jurist and political economist ventured in good earnest, and from hearty conviction, to found the theory of justice on God alone, and to reconcile statesmanship with the doctrines of Christianity. In a rigidly philosophical point of view he is open to a single charge, that of intermixing and almost identifying reason and revelation, without adequately maintaining the dignity of the latter. Meanwhile, it had been customary in France not only to disjoin the two, but likewise to set them in diametrical opposition and prevent the possibility of contact. Many champions of religion impaired their usefulness by an indiscriminate rejection of all philosophy; and yet dialectic reasoning is so thoroughly implanted in our nature that if false theories are really to be exploded it can be effected only by the substitution of more genuine ones. Bonald errs in the other extreme, since he altogether desires to subject Christianity to the reasoning and argumentative faculties. Truth herself, when confronting error, is frequently led into extreme views. Accordingly, it need create no surprise that similar infirmities beset St. Martin and Bonald, the leading French thinkers of the eighteenth century. To these names may be added that of Count de Maistre, whose views are more satisfactory and complete. In his work on the Pope he has explained with admirable clearness the basis of the Catholic Faith, while in his philosophical Dialogues, he has brought within our horizon, the most sublime views of religious science.

Circumstances have not hitherto been favourable in England to a radical change in philosophy. Such great external incidents as a world-wide commerce, the British

constitution, India and continental affairs, exclusively engage the active spirit of that practical people. The engrossing pursuits of a gigantic commerce scarcely admit of general philosophic habits of investigation; hence England must be content with ranking subordinate to France in this department. Other inducements, too, are wanting to produce a change similar to that obtaining among the French, viz., a revolution, political or intellectual, immediately preceding. Right sentiment and feeling are more particularly evinced in Britain by maintaining its ancient grandeur in unimpaired integrity, and by more deeply fixing it in massive and solid foundations. It is true there has been no lack lately of English writers, philosophers and orators, first of their respective kinds, serving as monuments of British genius, and inaugurating the dawn of a new era, the commencement of a new state of things as yet scarcely understood, whilst former conditions are fading away. Thus Sir William Jones, one of the ripest of English scholars, opened up to succeeding students a new mode of comprehending oriental, especially Indian archæology, in a devout spirit of inquiry, affecting the interests of humanity and the truths of holy Writ. This very experiment of Asiatic inquiry, if pursued with energy and spirit, as has been the case in some instances, would materially tend to enlarge the sphere of British thought; access to sublime philosophy would be more congenial to Englishmen by way of practical application of an universal history than by way of speculative contemplation solely. Burke, that consummate statesman and orator, shed abroad over the whole of Europe, and, judging from the frequent use made of it, over Germany especially, a copious store of political sagacity and moral experience drawn from the primitive source of all political wisdom. He was the deliverer of his age when it was involved in the storms of Revolution, and without maintaining any system of philosophy, he saw further into the constitution of states, and into religion as the bond of social and political existence than any philosophy could have done. And so it happened that whilst France struggled through the whirlpool of troublous times, and from the dark abyss of intellectual corruption and infidelity sought the light of eternal truth, England afforded some great and genial illustrations of deep-rooted positive principles in science and practical life.

LECTURE XV.

RETROSPECT.—GERMAN PHILOSOPHY.—SPINOZA AND LEIBNITZ.—LANGUAGE AND POETRY OF GERMANY DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES; LUTHER, HANS SACHS, JACOB BŒHMEN.—OPITZ AND THE SILESIAN SCHOOL.—DEGENERACY OF TASTE AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA: OCCASIONAL POEMS.—GERMAN POETS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.—FREDERIC II.—KLOPSTOCK: THE MESSIAH AND NORTHERN MYTHOLOGY.—WIELAND'S CHIVALROUS POETRY.—METRICAL QUANTITY OF THE ANCIENTS ADAPTED TO THE GERMAN LANGUAGE.—DEFENCE OF RHYME.—ADELUNG, GOTTSCHED, AND THE SO-CALLED GOLDEN AGE.—FIRST GENERATION OF MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE, OR PERIOD OF THE FOUNDERS.

IT may seem somewhat superfluous at the present day to combat the philosophy of the eighteenth century, the shade, as it were, of a departed enemy. But it is not really so, how much soever outward appearances may serve to favour the opinion. An evil is by no means wholly eradicated because it is less visible. In England, the disease never came to a head, and could not, therefore, receive a radical cure. In that country, as in France, there are individual and honourable exceptions, the omens of a better time: glorious and refreshing symptoms of the restoration and inexhaustible energies of Truth. But is the general tone of thinking altered, especially among men of learning and science? By no means: in France, the latter class still adopt the old system of considering the world, with its varied phenomena, as composed of corporeal atoms or molecules: that is to say, they take a material view of things, one which cannot fail to be most unsatisfactory and impracticable. Of all hypotheses, materialism is at once the most arbitrary and unsubstantial for the interests of science, and in its consequences the most pernicious to the vitality of morals, of national progress, and of religion. These conse-

quences may not indeed be so openly applied to practice, owing to increased experience and circumspection: yet it is painful to behold men of science, occupying high positions, so far below zero in all that deserves the name of philosophy. Such is the condition of affairs abroad: notwithstanding the return of public opinion to the right path, and the peculiar energy and sincerity characterizing some few individuals who walk in it. In Germany, the prevalent malady of the age—false philosophy and epidemic rationalism—took a different course, and exhibited features milder in form and practically less injurious from increased artificiality. It would, however, be altogether erroneous to suppose that Germany was exempt from the common malady, or to argue from a changed or disguised exterior that the infection was not substantially identical, emanating from the self-same source. Coarse materialism and the shallow atomic theory were never, indeed, able to strike deep root in the German mind: but, on the other hand, rationalism so deadening to the faculties became dominant in theology, and produced there a false illumination, as in the Schools a restless love of systems and empty formulas was the form which the malady assumed in the case of the great majority of ordinary thinkers and in the lower regions of intellectual life. But if some few men of commanding genius, tearing asunder the web of abstract rationalism, discovered both the beginning and the end, from which it would not have been difficult for the earnest inquirer to retrace his steps to the path of Revelation and Divine truth: still, there were many distinguished minds who only exchanged the errors of rationalism for a dreamy pantheism. This new evil, being of a more subtle nature, is confined to the higher regions of intellect, and bars the way to Truth and Christian philosophy: whilst the illiterate herd are ready, at the slightest prompting, to relapse into the old formulas of empty abstraction under its heterogeneous modifications. But both these evils, the common and the more refined, though not so startling as thorough obduracy or unmitigated confusion of intellectual life, as evinced in the English and French schools of philosophy, are of sufficient magnitude to forbid the idea that Germany has been wholly free from aberrations of this sort; against which the highest flights of genius are not, of themselves, any valid security.

If German philosophy did not at once fall into such violent extremes as that of France, it was not owing to any general popular regard for the national welfare, as was the case in England: for this feeling could hardly be engendered in a nation which was divided into a number of petty states. The most that can be affirmed of this intricate polity of several disjoined states is that, whilst eminently favourable to the formal and hair-splitting subtleties of jurisprudence, it succeeded in instilling into established formulas a spirit of judicial integrity; as also in checking, to some degree, avowed theories of decided injustice, such as those of Macchiavelli or Hobbes: until, eventually, the practice of the age became bolder and paved the way for those fearful theories. The mainstay of philosophy in Germany, and that which most of all tended, at first, to preserve it from the adoption of graver errors, was more especially the fact of its inheriting numerous reminiscences of the older philosophy, and preserving that thread of connexion with it which had been severed and lost sight of both in England and France. In this respect, Leibnitz was of especial benefit to his country: though even he may be compared to a physician seeking to prevent for a time the violent outbreaks of a virulent disorder, by means of palliatives, rather than attempting a radical cure. His philosophy, nevertheless, since he was profound as well as thoughtful, contained reminiscences suggestive of the past. The more his hypotheses resembled ingenious methods for solving antiquated problems, the more they served to incite future inquirers, possessing courage, genius, and inspiration, to explore all the labyrinths of thought, and the mysteries of knowledge. Chronologically speaking, he belongs to the transition-period, when the philosophy of the seventeenth century trenched upon that of the eighteenth, one of the most important eras of the human mind. But since both he and his philosophy were almost confined to Germany, making a very faint impression on France and England, I have deferred mentioning him until now. So, also, in the case of his opponent, Spinoza, the effect of whose doctrines was but little evident in his own country,* any more than in France and England, whilst it was most

* This philosopher was born at Amsterdam, in 1632, of Portuguese parents.—*Transl. note.*

sensibly felt in Germany. Spinoza's fundamental error—that of confounding God with the world, inasmuch as he denies the independence and substantiality of all individual being, discerning in the same merely so many varied manifestations of the power and energy of One, Eternal, All-comprehensive Being—virtually abolishes Religion. For in depriving God of personal attributes and man of liberty, he in reality declares immorality, falsehood, and irreligion, to be nothing but mere appearances, and thus removes the essential difference between good and evil. This error is in such close affinity with mere natural reason as perhaps to constitute the earliest which immediately followed original Truth: only that Spinoza reduced Pantheism to a more scientific form. This by-path is one to which even scientific reason, when seeking to attain the knowledge of the Truth by purely unassisted means, is so prone, that Descartes, from whose system that of Spinoza more immediately proceeded, was only saved from falling over the precipice at whose brink he stood by his want of depth and decision. And here it is necessary to guard against confounding the error and the man. It frequently happens that he who is the first to point to a new path of error, or to traverse it to the end with determination and decision, is far less objectionable than his successors, who adopt a route equally wrong with hesitating vacillation. Spinoza's moral theory, though not that of Christianity, for he was not a Christian himself, is pure and noble as that of the Stoics of antiquity, if not superior. What is so much to his advantage when contrasted with opponents who do not understand or feel his depth, or with those who, half unconsciously, have entered on similar paths of error, is not merely the scientific clearness and decision of his mode of thought but that his whole system seems cast in one mould; as he thought, so he felt. His cannot be termed the worship of Nature, such as fires the bosom of the poet, the artist, or the naturalist; still less is it real love or devotion, for how could this feeling find any congenial object of regard in the absence of faith in a personal God? An all-penetrating feeling of the Infinite is especially associated with all his sentiments, and lifts him above the world of sense. Every decisive error which is fundamentally wrong is equally exceptionable, and it might

appear as though no graduated scale could be formed under such circumstances. Yet if a comparison be instituted between Spinoza's error and the atheism of the eighteenth century, a great distinction will at once become apparent. This material philosophy, if it may be so called, which endeavours to explain all things by matter, and assigns the foremost place to sense, is so grievous an error as almost to sink below the region of humanity. Seldom is it the good fortune of individuals who have once fallen into this abyss to give any promise of escape from it; though it may easily happen that a whole nation or an age may revolt from the philosophy of sense after having seen its moral consequences unfolded in all their deformity. The lofty spiritualism of Spinoza's theory may, on the other hand, disclose to the active and searching inquirer many routes whereby the path of truth is to be regained. It cannot, however, be denied that a species of error which is calculated to ensnare the noblest intellects is at the same time the most insidious and ruinous: the direct results may be practically less pernicious, but the seeds of mischief are all the more deeply rooted, and will sooner or later entail destructive effects upon a whole nation or age, much in the same way as a disease in the human body when it has seized on the most vital parts. Such was that refined Pantheism, a mental disorder threatening the very citadel of life, which assumed a variety of shapes in Germany. Now it appears in a magical exuberance of enthusiastic fancy, now critically weighing, discerning, and recognizing individual points as historical facts, though thoroughly comprehending the whole; whilst occasionally it is found half hidden in the worn-out paradoxes of dialectic ingenuity. Thereby all sense of truth is permanently and generally undermined, and the faculty of ascertaining and grasping what is positively divine: as also the solid certainties of life and perception as a whole, are involved in common ruin. This doom can only be met or averted by a truly Christian philosophy such as Leibnitz constructed, both in idea and design the most perspicuous at this epoch. He may justly, therefore, be regarded as the crown and summit of the older European school of modern philosophy, exclusively appertaining to no one nation: the circle of which is formed by Bacon, Descartes, and Spinoza, and

himself. It would have been well if the track of these eminent explorers had been pursued further with constancy and assiduous zeal. Leibnitz undoubtedly left the Idea of his philosophic system in an unfinished state, and accordingly he was unable completely to overcome the evil which even in his time lurked under the guise of strictly inclusive isolation, though he perceived it in the germ, and aimed at its destruction.

The system of Leibnitz in many respects refers to that of Spinoza. It is essentially militant almost throughout, though it does not always take a polemic form. Yet it everywhere counteracts the existing philosophy of the age, rebutting its objections, solving doubts, supplying deficiencies, adapting itself to the spirit and exigencies of the times, and mediating generally. Rarely is its action independent, or absolute. Bayle, the literary sceptic, and Locke the founder of the sensuous philosophy, were his principal antagonists, not to speak of other and more personal controversies. But at the head of all these opponents Spinoza stands in marked pre-eminence; with him Leibnitz contends as with some invisible yet formidable opponent, even when he does not mention him by name. In like manner he has omitted to enumerate several philosophers with whose opinions he coincides, and who were not so well known to fame: he is also silent as to the actual sources whence he often drew his arguments. Definitely to avow the existence of an infinite world of spirits, of which the world of sense is a mere external covering, was not in keeping with his characteristic features. The doctrine of innate ideas, such as he conceived, leads to a system of abstract notions to be imagined as though indigenous or impressed upon the intellect in the shape of a lifeless plan, rather than to be perceived as the inner working of a living spirit. The doctrine of unconscious conceptions might introduce the inquirer to a nearer route leading to this end: inasmuch as the acknowledgment that our consciousness is incomplete, or in other words that we are only half aware of our own consciousness, the other half being hidden from our eyes, constitutes at least the first step towards penetrating the mysteries, the secret laboratory of the soul. Thus in the world of sense the stars at night correctly inform us re-

specting the luminary of day and its true course. On the other hand, the hypothesis started by Leibnitz, namely, that all objects of sense are a mere confused chaos composed of simple essences or monads, lying in a dormant state and as yet undeveloped to complete consciousness—is much too nearly connected with the atomic theory of Epicurus and of modern atheism, and after all constitutes only a sort of unsuccessful medium between it and the perfect recognition of a spiritual world. Again, his mode of solving the chief difficulty which baffled the philosophy of his time, in reference to the nature of the connection subsisting between spirit and matter, is but an ingenious artifice. In assuming that the Creator had originally brought both into harmonious unison, as a skilful mechanician might contrive to do in the case of two time-pieces, his argument is based on the presumption that this world is nothing more than an artistic mechanical contrivance. His celebrated *Theodicee,* or vindication of God, a treatise affording an explanation relative to the undeniable amount of wickedness and evil present in the world, is a reply to a question which will always force itself on natural reason. It is couched in the dexterous terms of a practised diplomatist, whose business it is on all occasions to bring into prominent relief the points most favourable to his sovereign, and studiously to abstain from entering on those topics which, seemingly or really, tell against his interests. It is altogether impossible for mere rational philosophy to answer the question relative to the origin of evil and the imperfections of the world without either totally ignoring their existence in defiance of common sense, or ascribing them to the handiwork of the Almighty himself, which is revolting to all right feelings. But the theory of Leibnitz which elicited the most pointed shafts of Voltaire's satire, namely, the assertion that this world is the best of all possible worlds,* has found its counterpart, in our own day, in the views of a celebrated thinker: who, referring all things to *self,* holds that the world was fashioned for the sole purpose of exercising and developing the energies of human intellect: to which end any world, howsoever devised and constructed, would have served in a manner at least equally efficient. But neither this extremely Spartan, nor that ingenious

* This theory is sometimes called Optimism.—*Transl. note.*

and diplomatic, reply can avail to satisfy philosophy or the feelings. With admiration we observe, from a recently published dogmatic work composed by Leibnitz,* how thorough and lucid were his views of religion and a scheme of faith. Yet the loftiest and profoundest idea discoverable throughout his fragmentary knowledge, (which Lessing, with such correct feeling rendered especially prominent,) is the sentiment of an ever-increasing perfectibility of the world in a metaphysical sense, or the advancing glorification of God in the eternal progress of his creatures from one degree of brightness to a higher. This idea, in reference to improvement in metaphysical knowledge, forms the actual living centre of Christian Revelation, just as the doctrine of the Fall constituted the principal mystery of the Mosaic Dispensation. Of the small number of those philosophers who have elevated their contemplation to the recognition and acknowledgment of Revelation, the majority have stopped short at Mosaic tradition, whose doctrine of the Fall unassisted human reason would never have fathomed had not the most remote antiquity been familiar with it, from the traditions of a primeval world. This doctrine, although it is the very foundation and beginning of all true knowledge, derives its genuine importance and significancy from the other Idea, to which Reason is enabled to conceive and imagine something analogous, according to the indefinite notion of a progressive perfection, which is so frequently misapplied in the affairs of ordinary practical life. But this idea does not attain perfect metaphysical clearness without the aid of the Christian Revelation, since that alone can give us a clear insight and conviction of the perfect and illustrious glory of creation as consequent on the Fall. Leibnitz may rather be supposed to have constructed this idea on mathematical principles than to have prosecuted and exhausted it in all its religious profundity. The more distinctly intelligible his plan of a peculiar Christian philosophy becomes, the more is it to be lamented that his design remained unfinished, and that his enlightened mind did not

* Leibnitzen's System der Theologie, nach dem manuscripte von Hannover (den lateinischen text zur seite) ins Deutsche übersetzt von Dr. Räss und Dr. Weis, &c. Dritte vermehrte Auflage; Mainz, 1825.

rise above the abstract conceptions and associations of his age to the vital knowlege of Truth.

The Leibnitzian notions respecting Space and Time, more particularly prove how completely the views of a loftier philosophy were lost sight of in his day, or at least how essentially they differed from the theories then prevalent. The older philosophy recognized Space to be the infinite theatre of God's glory, and Time the living pulsation of eternal Love: holding both, according to their original and not yet perverted nature, to constitute the vital organs of Divine creativeness—the expanding, all-embracing wings of the Almighty's manifestations. Even the natural man, however sensuous, is lost in endless amazement, and feels himself directly transported to the regions of Divinity on contemplating the idea of space, vast and immeasureable, yet capable of being comprehended in imagination. An infinite depth opens up to his inward view, like the rich fulness of life itself, when from the present moment he looks back at the past, and then forward into the vista of future years. In Space and Time, Leibnitz however, beheld nothing more than the order and arrangement of things co-existing or consecutive. After this manner, meaningless and inanimate conceptions gradually supplanted living right feelings in all that is most calculated to lift man above the world of sense. His philosophy became a prevalent sect in the Schools of Germany through the instrumentality of Wolf: this observation will suffice to characterize it. A sect bearing upon active life is distinguished by the direction it takes and the influence it exercises. But when immured within the restricted confines of the Schools, the spirit of sect is wont to manifest itself much after the same fashion in all ages: continuing to be a dead formula, whether Aristotle or Descartes, Leibnitz or Kant, be the master who lends the impress of a name to stamp conceptions that were truly living thoughts in the mind of their discoverer, but now are only passed about as lifeless forms. Meanwhile, Germany was at least saved from the still more pernicious sectarian spirit of atheistic philosophy of the senses, which is so destructive of life in the soul: nor was the pedantry of formulas of any long existence. Though for the most part composing in Latin or French, Leibnitz had nevertheless

imparted a new impulse to the scientific study of the history and language of Germany; Wolf, too, gave meritorious encouragement to the cultivation of the language by his own example. He was soon followed by others, who, though trained in the school of Wolfian philosophy, were yet in a certain measure independent thinkers. These, then, aided by some few leading poets, were the first to raise the German language from the barbarism into which it had sunk, until Klopstock founded a new era about the middle of the eighteenth century, and became the actual father of the present German literature.

Before I proceed to Klopstock, it is necessary to take a brief retrospective glance at the interval between old and new German literature. It is true, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contributed but a limited number of distinguished writers who employed the German language as the channel of their thoughts, but they were so much the more remarkable and extraordinary. It has already been shewn how mediæval chivalrous poetry and art fell into oblivion during the disputes of the sixteenth century, whilst during the civil wars of that and the succeeding age, the very language itself became demoralized. There was yet one remedy for this widely-spreading disorder, and a set-off against the loss of the older treasures of language, in the German version of the Bible. It is an established fact that all thorough philological critics consider this translation as the normal text and standard of High-German classic expression, and that not Klopstock alone, but many more authors of the first celebrity have modelled their style directly in this mould, and have drawn from this source. It is remarkable that no other modern tongue has adopted so many Biblical terms and phrases, and introduced them into common language. My own opinion quite coincides with that of the critics who hold this circumstance to be most felicitous, to which I think I am justified in ascribing some portion of that continuous intellectual energy, life, and simplicity, which preeminently characterize the diction of our most distinguished German writers. Whatsoever either catholic or protestant scholars may discover to be censurable in Luther's version, is really restricted to individual passages, which he has interpreted according to the spirit of his

teaching in a manner differing from that of the earlier doctors of the church, or in certain points of history, physics, or geography, in which he was without the necessary helps. But the more that attempts have been multiplied, within the last thirty years, to make the Bible subsidiary to the so-called friends of enlightenment by means of rational and explanatory translations, an attempt that has found favour even with professed Catholics, the more has the excellence of the old-German version been acknowledged by those who have abandoned this fashionable folly. Strictly speaking, the work is not Luther's alone, having originated, as is well known, in a selection of the best from among several extant versions, and he was assisted in his explanations by various learned friends, more especially by Melancthon. Nevertheless, his merit is incontestable on the score of energetic language, peculiar genius, and forcible German expression. His original writings are replete with eloquence rarely equalled in the annals of any nation for centuries. As may be expected, this eloquence is marked by all those qualities which are excusable in revolutionary times. But this force of revolutionary eloquence so peculiar to Luther is not confined to his half-political works which pointedly bear on public life: as, for instance, his "Address to the German Nobility;" but in all the works he has left behind him it is sufficiently perceptible: in almost all of them the mighty struggle going on within him is laid bare to observation. There are, as it were, two worlds contending with each other for the soul of this truly great man so richly endowed by God and nature. His writings uniformly exhibit the spectacle of a contest between light and darkness; between a firm and immovable faith, and the fierceness of his own unsubdued passion; in a word, between God and himself. Of the choice he made between these diverging paths, of the use to which he applied his wonderful faculties, opinion must still vary as much as ever. As regards my personal judgment in the matter, I need scarcely say that his writings, like his life, produce but one impression, namely, the sympathy usually felt when a commanding and sublime intellect is led astray by over-confidence in its own strength. His power and greatness of mind, irrespective of their application and development, seem to me never to have been

fully appreciated by any of his modern adherents and admirers. His coadjutors consisted, for the most, of merely learned, moderate, enlightened men of the ordinary stamp. He it was to whose modelling hands the destiny of those times, whether for good or for evil, was, humanly speaking, committed: for he was the man who decided everything in his age and nation.

Luther was essentially a popular author. No other country in modern Europe has possessed so many remarkable, comprehensive, powerful, and intellectually important popular writers as Germany. How inferior soever the higher classes of Germany may have been during some ages to those of other lands, or how late soever they may have attained to a fair standard of refinement: in no other country did the people, as a whole, evince so great a degree of general mental power from the earliest times on record, or so much of that natural energy which lies in the depths of humanity. It is an old saying that the power of kings is of Divine institution; it is likewise an observation incidental to all time that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Both, if rightly understood, are perfectly true. Woe to them who would misinterpret or confound this voice of God! Compassion is due to those who, devoted to an idle, lifeless, political system, fancy they can lead the people according to their own selfish and sordid maxims; the people, more keenly alive to the real nature of their projects than is commonly supposed, are not easily thus misled. But they are guilty of a most heinous offence who wantonly, and for destructive purposes, venture to set in motion that natural popular energy, in its origin so worthy of respect and honour: a power which will never cease to be terrible in its operations whenever it is diverted from its only legitimate object—faithful obedience to the will of God. And narrow must be the judgment of those who ignore the existence of this energy, because they cannot estimate it aright, or who think it can be destroyed where it has endured from the beginning throughout ages, as in Germany, simply because, like many other hidden faculties of nature, it is manifested only on rare occasions.

Not only did religion furnish scope and opportunity to

exercise the talents of Luther and other popular writers of Protestant Germany, but even poetry and philosophy engaged their attention. In illustration of my remark, I will only select from a host of names two of the most distinguished: the celebrated *Meister-Sänger* of Nürnberg, and the well-known Christian thinker and seer, who in the time of the Thirty Years' war passed under the name of the "Teutonic Philosopher," in Protestant countries and the north of Europe generally.

Germany is exceedingly rich in popular lays and poems. The poetry is generally of two kinds: consisting partly of songs, scattered fragmentary relics of the lost poetry of early heroic chivalry, of which the tradition has been interrupted by revolutions or supplanted by the modern economy of civil life. Partly, its character is of a rougher external cast, such as is adapted to the tastes of a guild or craft, though not destitute of inventive spirit: and this constitutes the peculiar characteristic of later German popular poetry. In minstrelsy, as in daily life, Hans Sachs* of Nürnberg was a working man. He was not only the most copious but also the most forcible in his own style of art, particularly witty, and possessed of strong common sense: compared with early authors in the literature of other countries, he is more inventive than Chaucer, richer than Marot, and more poetical than either. As regards his diction, the rich mine of treasure he has bequeathed can hardly be said to have been yet made the most of.

The same may be said of Jacob Bœhmen,† the "Teutonic philosopher," commonly so ill-treated at the hands of *litterateurs*. Indeed, they frankly profess to be equally ignorant of his merits and demerits; but they are likewise in the dark respecting the external relations of the *man*, his connection with his age, the circumstances attending the dissemination

* Born in 1494 at Nürnberg. Having completed his apprenticeship, he set up as a shoemaker. He is distinguished for wit, grace, and inventive genius. Luther is the theme of one of his compositions.

† A noted mystic, founder of the sect of Behmenists, born at Gorlitz, in Lusatia, 1575, and, like Hans Sachs, a shoemaker by trade. His works were translated into English by the Rev. Wm. Law, and published with a Life in 4 vols. 4to. Lond. 1764-8.

of his own opinions, and others like them. I have previously alluded to the inconsistency involved in a superficial diffusion of lifeless formulas among the learned and educated, and throughout literature in general, whilst genuine profound philosophy is consigned to the uncertain care of secret associations or of individuals, or to enthusiasts from among the lower orders. Such, however, was the case at that time both in Protestant Germany and in England. Jacob Bœhmen was regarded as a visionary. But even if it were satisfactorily established that imagination had a greater share in his lucubrations than a scientific intellect, it must at least be conceded that the faculty of fancy resident in this singular genius was richly endowed and enlightened. If, on that account, he is to be regarded simply as a poet, and compared with other Christian bards who have attempted to depict supernatural themes, Milton, Klopstock, Dante, he must be allowed to have all but surpassed them in imaginative fulness and depth of feeling, and to be scarcely their inferior in point of individual passages of poetic beauty and expression. The springs of Nature are accessible to every gentle pious heart, for her inmost being is closely connected with the life-stream of the human soul: and perhaps much is clear and transparent to child-like vision that is clouded, as with a sevenfold covering, when sought to be viewed through the telescopes and artistic contrivances of the scientific inquirer. For viewing nature there is, too, a peculiar revelation contained in the immediate emotions of internal life. After long wearisome research into matters appertaining to Divine knowledge, our own times are returning more and more to this lucid simplicity of faith. Much in the same way, philosophy will have to revert, in our day, to those primary sources of inner contemplation, and of natural faculties neither disturbed nor misled by civilization, but vigorous and piercing, when considering not, indeed, the Creator himself, but the foremost glory of his creation—Man. Although the highest mental illumination, with many elevating operations of grace, will be always wanting to the Christian philosopher who is not within the pale of the Church, yet we must take into consideration whether his separation from it proceeds from a perverse tendency of his own mind, or

is occasioned only by the accident of his birth. Whatever deficiencies or philosophical errors, arising in some measure from misconception, may be observable in the doctrines of Jacob Bœhmen, the historian of the German language must not omit his name, since few authors of his time have better displayed its resources. In addition to great intellectual wealth, his style is marked by pliant vigour and copious originality, that ceased to be manifest, in the same degree, on the termination of the Thirty Years' war, and that are nowhere found now that artistic refinement, external smoothness, and imitation of foreign forms of expression, have changed the character of our language.

It was about the same period of the Thirty Years' war, so destructive in its later effects, yet so quickening to mental energy while it raged, that Opitz, of Silesia, explored a new path in German culture, poetry, and language, in which he had numerous followers. He more immediately attached himself to the genius of the Dutch who, at that time, possessed a Hugo Grotius, and were not only the most learned and enlightened of all Protestant States, but had also made considerable progress in poetic pursuits, and were in possession of native tragedies, modelled after the antique, long prior to the celebrated tragic poets of France in the reign of Louis XIV. The real merits of Opitz, however, do not consist in his gleanings from foreign nations, such as the Dutch, or the pastoral romances of the Spaniards; nor were his dramatic efforts in free translation or imitation from the Greek or Italian stage crowned with any signal success. Even in the case of his own lyrical, mixed, and didactic verse, to be correctly judged, we should consider what he was fitted to become by nature, and what he desired and meant to convey, rather than what he actually produced. He is wont to be styled the Father of German poetry; but it seems to me that since Klopstock's day very few of his ungrateful children have been eager to prove their relationship. He was specially calculated to excel in heroic poetry. This branch he intended to cultivate in reference to German nationality. However, tossed to and fro in the turmoil of those restless times, he died before he had time to accomplish his object. No susceptible nature will fail to perceive in his poetry that

sublimity of thought and emotion, those distinctive features of the epic bard. Whilst his language is marked by unaffected simplicity, coupled with dignified vigour, seldom if ever approached by any of his successors, in my opinion; on this score I would incline to pronounce him superior to Klopstock who, in his own age, incomparably distanced all competitors.

The Silesian school could at this time boast of several other poets, of whom I will now only mention Flemming, whose verse, glowing with rich oriental colouring, celebrates passages of private friendship, passion, and love, and records incidents of travel in the interior of Russia, then little known, and a sojourn in Persia: his versification is less smooth than that of Opitz. It was doubtless an unfavourable circumstance that these poets were either actually not Germans, in the broad acceptation of the word, being merely Silesian provincial poets, or at any rate were looked upon in that light. The more the energy of the German nation became broken, since that unhappy civil war, whose flames, fed by the sympathy of half Europe and the wiles of foreign policy, raged throughout Germany in devastating fury for a period extending over thirty years—and after the still more hapless peace of 1648, so unfavourable to the general development,—the more was poetry paralyzed, till it eventually declined to the level of mere occasional verse, a degenerate species of artificial display, as is nearly always the case when poetry is destitute of a proper aim and has lost its living native force. This spurious taste was introduced by Hoffmanswaldau, and brought into more general notice by the talents of Lohenstein. The interval from 1648 to the middle of the eighteenth century was the actual epoch of barbarism, a sort of interregnum and chaotic intermediate condition of German literature, during which the language itself, fluctuating between a would-be French jargon and confused German, was at once over-refined and vulgar. Politically, too, Germany was in a most ignominious and infelicitous state in the age directly succeeding the peace of Westphalia. Her power began to revive towards the beginning of the eighteenth century. Austria was once more reinstated in her brilliant and extensive supremacy, many of the leading European thrones were occupied by scions of German princely houses,

whilst in one instance* ducal honours were elevated to a regal title. All this necessarily operated beneficially, though gradually, on genius, civilization, and language. Many princes were induced, if only from motives of State policy, to promote science. At first, progress was slow, for numerous were the obstacles, and art as well as language had strayed far from the right path. The first lyric poets of the eighteenth century who excelled in sentiment and diction were, like their predecessors in the seventeenth, mostly restricted in subject to a similar species of courtly, festive, occasional pieces. Those whose expression evinced a nicer and more elaborate degree of care, for instance Hagedorn, and after him Utz, too frequently contented themselves with imitating the French or English muse, nor, indeed, unsuccessfully; they rarely expressed themselves in poems of original invention, and in songs of felt emotion. Haller and Gleim, most justly entitled to the appellation of poets, the one for his exalted flight, the other for his facile copiousness, exhibit carelessness, not to say decided incorrectness of expression. Nevertheless, their claims to consideration appear great when their services, as regards culture of the language, are contrasted with the barbarism into which it had sunk. And their merit appears greater when the unfavourable circumstances and relations of the times are taken into consideration. Some of these first revivers of the language and poetry of Germany died young: Kleist, for instance, to whom, perhaps, the palm of pre-eminence ought to be awarded; so also Kronegk and Elias Schlegel. Others engaged in the duties of active life, removed to foreign lands, or were otherwise dispersed. A centre of union was wanting, which was generally, but in vain, looked for in the person of Frederick II. It has been the fashion of late to vindicate his conduct by arguing that the German language and learning had fallen so low that an intellectual monarch may be readily pardoned for turning away from the contemplation of both with disgust and contempt. This statement is not altogether correct: it is difficult to say what might not have been effected in favour of German intellectual culture by a sovereign whose contem-

* The ducal house of Brandenburg was raised to monarchy in the person of Frederick I. in the year 1701.—*Transl. note.*

poraries were Klopstock, Winckelmann, Kant, Lessing, with many other highly distinguished men, some of them born in his own dominions, and all devoted to science and art! Was any reign ever graced with such a galaxy of brilliant intellect, eminently adapted to form the nucleus of a learned society—and of what stamp were the foreigners that monopolized the king's favour, with the sole exception of Voltaire? A Maupertuis, a La Metrie, by no means the most distinguished names in French literature. Klopstock can hardly be blamed when, with a self-respect honourable to his feelings, he construed the slight put upon his fellow-countrymen into a personal insult. This emotion, keenly felt, was often insinuated, very much to the king's disadvantage, in a comparison ingeniously instituted between the monarch and Cæsar, in whose time more Greek, good or bad, was spoken or written at Rome, than French in Germany during the eighteenth century. The Latin tongue. at that period, was as deficient in quantity and quality of classical compositions, with the exception of a few esteemed memorials of the past, as was modern German literature prior to 1750. And yet Cæsar counted it worth while to devote his most careful attention to the language, nay, did not disdain personally to cultivate and instruct in it. By this means he became the foremost orator of his day, and one of the best authors in the language: a distinction to which no one has ever yet attained in a foreign tongue. Upon the whole, it was perhaps quite as well that the then favourite idea of establishing a learned society was not carried into execution. Individual development might, indeed, have been a gainer, but German literature in the aggregate would probably have been fettered and limited, and savoured of provincial taste instead of being thoroughly German. A more speedy development would have been too dearly purchased at the expense of copiousness and freedom, attributes that now invest it with peculiar significancy and value. But the grounds on which the exculpation of Frederick II. rests are far from being substantially correct. If kings were on all occasions to defer the promotion of science until the ranks of literature are duly filled up and have become sufficiently famous through other means, or perchance have lost the first freshness of youthful vigour, nothing would remain to be done but to gather together a

select band of the most inoffensive and disabled of their number, and place them in a kind of hospital, styled—Academy of Science. But if the genius of a nation is really intended to be formed and directed, the budding talents of youthful intellect should have free scope granted them, together with a sufficiency of auxiliary means of development, whilst especial directions ought to be given to bear upon those points likely to promote the efficiency of national progress. Klopstock's sensitiveness may be pardoned the rather that he himself was undoubtedly well calculated to impart a salutary influence, a fresh tone, not to poetry alone, but to every department of literature. It was competent to his comprehensive spirit to have effected an amount of manifold good in Germany, corresponding to the evil perpetrated by Voltaire in France, had he but been furnished with fitting opportunity, power, and assistance.

Klopstock at that time stood solitary and alone in the German world with his lofty national feeling, in which few sympathized, and which none rightly understood. His only alternative, therefore, was to enunciate it in his poetry. The Messiah in reality inaugurates a higher tone in modern German literature: so extraordinary and important in its results is its merit, especially in language and expression; though this poem is mostly admired in name only by the great majority of the public, never having vitally influenced sentiment or feeling. Its general plan, suffers, more than usual, from the difficulties that beset works of this nature, and which have never yet been satisfactorily overcome. As a poet, Klopstock is, on the whole, most successful in his elegiac passages. He depicts in a masterly manner each gradation, combination, and depth of elegiac feeling: he carries sympathy along with him, how far soever he may be led by the current of his emotions. He is even enabled to enlist warm sympathetic interest in favour of Abbadona's fate, one of the fallen spirits. There is, however, yet another element in his poetry, in addition to elegiac feeling, which has a disturbing effect; I mean his rhetorical art, which occasionally leads him to exaggerate: hence his prose often betrays forced curtness, isolated maxims and turns of thought, so epigrammatic as to be unintelligible: whilst his epic verse on the other hand, runs into the opposite extreme of

ingeniouslong-winded harangue. The great prominence given to speeches in Virgil and Milton, is carried considerably further in the Messiah. If we concede to the muse that celestial personages may adopt human, nay even German expression, it will yet be difficult for any one to persuade himself of the fact that spiritual natures like theirs, are in the habit of interchanging such prolix discourses.

The immense discrepancy existing between the first and second half of the Messiah, is pretty clear proof that both the nation and the poet himself were not at all satisfied with the general results of the undertaking.

Klopstock entertained lofty conceptions of a new, and especially German, poetic school. With the genius of a master he at once proceeded to sketch the extreme points necessary to the success of so mighty a project, combining in his Messiah, on the one hand Christianity, on the other northern mythology and primordial German annals, and these he was desirous of uniting as the two chief elements of all modern European culture and poesy. Danish antiquaries and poets were then beginning to elucidate and revive the mythology and Edda of the north. In this meritorious design Klopstock participated: only it can hardly be supposed that a few stray lyrics and fragmentary allusions would suffice to introduce into the realms of living poetry myths hitherto confined to the students of northern literature. Works representing the whole system in copious detail were alone able to accomplish this, and so the poets of Denmark themselves seemed to feel.

The remarks previously made in reference to his truth and manifold variety of elegiac feeling, as well as the condemnation of his rhetorical acuteness, equally apply to Klopstock's *Hermanni*, his next greatest achievement. As a dramatic poem, it was certainly composed for a future *possible* stage, more than the existing one, which, at that time and even later, seemed adapted to any species of recreation, purpose, or effort, rather than poetry. He had enunciated only the extreme points of new German poetry: all that lay between Christianity and northern mythology, all that issued from the very union of the two, was omitted. The whole of the middle ages, some twelve centuries from Attila down to the Peace of Westphalia, if this may be regarded as the boun-

dary-line, where Poetry ceases in History, were utterly ignored. That region, then, was wanting, which has in all instances approved itself most favourable to the interests of modern poetry, and in which it is well for it to reside, at least for a season, if it would aspire to historical or national importance. This great gap which Klopstock had left, was, in some measure, filled up, at the commencement, by the exertions of two important names,—Bodmer, as a scholar, Wieland as a poet. Bodmer was partial to romantic chivalrous song, and he was the first to restore the olden relics of this department of German literature: yet his method was not calculated to be generally popular at the first. The muse of Wieland addressed herself exclusively to the romantic element, which Klopstock had not cultivated at all. It must be confessed that historico-romantic verse, after the manner of Tasso, though not exactly bearing upon the period of the Crusades, yet selected from the rich poetical store-house of mediæval times generally, would have contributed more to effect what was proposed than a poem like Oberon, almost devoid of historical foundation, and serving as a mere play of the imagination, in Ariosto's fashion. But despite of all its imperfections and too modern admixtures, this incitement to romantic feeling was at that time worthy of all praise. It is a matter of regret that the bard so soon abandoned the joyous field of olden chivalric poetry, and indeed poetry as a whole. The gravest objection to be urged against the creator of Oberon is that when he might have become the German Ariosto, or at least the rival of his Italian brother-minstrel, he preferred remaining the imitator of Crebillon in prose. And yet it is very evident from his subsequent performances, even in point of language and expression, that he was never so felicitous as in compositions such as Oberon, of itself far more calculated to perpetuate his name to posterity than all his Greek romances.

Of the remaining poets who flourished in the first generation, Gessner is the most original. His verse, keeping aloof from all positive local truth, and at the same time destitute of any decided fiction or myth, wanders in the region of vague uncertainty, and on that account soon grows monotonous and unreal. His language is extremely meri-

torious; but here too, his singular avoidance both of rhyme and metre, in the kind of poetry he adopted, discovers a tendency to indefinite shapelessness.

Klopstock's precept and example in one respect, operated almost unfavourably on the German language. In itself it was not censurable in him to practise and apply the syllabic quantity of the ancients. In order to rescue an idiom from a state of total disorder, severe, artistic, and even foreign forms may be salutary enough, if only to escape the beaten track of apathetic negligence by one determined violent effort. Besides, the ancient hexameter measure in some degree became familiar to the German ear, and, externally, acclimatized, although close inspection might prove that the presence of a foreign element is always more or less distasteful to the inward sense. However much the culture of the language may be indebted to borrowed forms, as a beneficial practice, yet the choice of a strange syllabic measure is not to be recommended in the composition of a genuine national epic, of which the first condition is that the verse should be agreeable and easy to the ear as well as to the understanding, and couched in diction that instinctively, as it were, falls into melody. There is this additional difficulty in the adoption of hexameter verse, that if treated with relaxed strictness, those, for whose especial enjoyment it was intended, complain: whilst rigorous adherence to rhythmical laws can hardly be maintained in a protracted form without, in some degree, sacrificing sense, and occasionally expression, to sound. It may be said that Klopstock's Messiah was, from the nature of its subject, not adapted to the general taste, but limited to a certain class of readers; and that his choice of the measure is, accordingly, more excusable if not actually justifiable.

It was contrary to the nature and genius of the language for the poet to indulge his prejudice so far as to detest and even wish to banish rhyme: but this latter he could not effect. For it had become a custom of ten centuries' standing—so far back does the introduction of rhyme into High-German date—and it was no light task to eradicate what long practice had deeply rooted in the entire structure of the language. Neither is it mere custom: rhyme being associated with the original essence of German idiom. Klop-

stock fancied that his country's oldest poems and songs were only rhythmical, not rhymed. This supposition is unfounded; though the species of rhyme they contain is not exactly analogous to our own method of closing the verse with feet of similar sound. Their less perfect but still very regular rhymes, occurring in emphatic syllables or words, or in the middle or even the commencement of the line, such as prevail in Icelandic and old Scandinavian song, sometimes termed Alliteration, were common to the Germanic dialects. All the ancient Saxon verse, both of English and German composition, is thus framed. The transition from this method to complete rhyme, became very easy. It need not, therefore, surprise us to find all German dialects adopting it, in the earliest stages of development. It is connected with the still valid fundamental law of German pronunciation and language. This law, recognized by the whole body of critics, insists on emphasis or stress being laid on important, especially root, syllables: a stress increasing in the ratio of their significance and importance. In a word, we do not measure but weigh our syllables. We do not accentuate for the convenience of the hearer, but, engrossed in the word itself, we at once pick out the significant radical tones, and dwelling upon them as essentials, we comparatively disregard fugitive incidental syllables. It is on this principle, of suiting the action to the nature of the syllable, that the real beauty of German pronunciation, even ordinarily, depends, as also the euphony of German songs and poems. It follows, then, that we have no longs or shorts, as the ancients had: our significant syllables being marked by a countless variety of gradations both in import and weight. This is an insurmountable obstacle, and constitutes the actual reason why the application of ancient rhythmical principles to our tongue can never be more than approximate: to a fuller equality of successful results a total change in the language, nay the pronunciation, would be indispensable. But this fundamental law of our idiom in a peculiar manner paves the way for rhyme. To languages that are quite destitute of rhythm, like the French, rhyme is absolutely necessary, from the very want of a sensible limitation, separation, and connexion of the verse. In strongly accentuated languages such as the Italian and Spanish, rhyme

readily assumes the shape of a mere musical play of syllables and words. In the German tongue, which takes its rise somewhat nearer the original source, and is not unrhythmical, the fundamental law of pronunciation enjoining emphasis on important and root syllables, led to observation and appreciation of the accordant tones in them, and eventually to rhyme itself. In this peculiar manner did the German language come into possession of rhyme, and though neither the French, the Italian, nor the Spanish mode is altogether applicable to our tongue, yet rhyme itself is agreeable to its nature, and will never be discarded so long as it continues to be a language. The real essence of German versification consists in relinquishing all foreign syllabic measures—both the old rhythmical and the ingenious romantic rhymes, as exercises merely preparatory to a more pliant condition of culture, useful enough in their time—and reverting to the simple forms of German verse. These native forms exist not alone in fragmentary popular measures, nor in imitations of the old German standards found in the "Niebelungen," any more than in the usual measures adopted by the favourite poets of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, they must proceed from the inner constitution of our language as it is now developed, and be adapted to the exigencies of lyric or epic poetry, as the case may be, in various, manifold, yet simple methods, in conformity with the highest possible standard of excellence: so also with regard to our drama which, from its thoroughly lyrical tendency, almost imperatively demands the aid of rhyme.

But to return to the historical thread of our remarks, the earlier epoch of Klopstock and Wieland. In referring to his own time, it was an exceedingly laudable endeavour on the part of Wieland to perpetuate in German poetry the plan of rhyme, such as prevailed in joyous Provençal, and in the ancient chivalric and love songs, and to protect it from the blind zeal of a host of bards to whom Klopstock gave offence without intending it.

Being fond of philological inquiry, and desirous of entering on a career of his own, Wieland was every now and then led into partiality and paradox. Adelung narrowly escaped falling into a similar error. With so great a number of preliminary compilations made by others in the

domains of philology before him, more might reasonably have been expected at Adelung's hands, when his labours professed to embrace the vast field of German literature, in assigning to each individual expression its exact equivalent. Yet, notwithstanding all the shortcomings and errors that the researches of recent times have proved against him, his efforts to extend an improved acquaintance with the genius of the language generally were meritorious as a beginning and in connexion with the times in which he lived. His chief prejudice lay in limiting the purity of the high-German idiom to the narrow confines of the old Margravate of Messia,* and to a brief period of excelling taste which he extolled in glowing terms as the happy, though short-lived, golden age of German literature. A striking inconsistency in his argument is betrayed in the antipathy and injustice with which he treats the leading author of that very time, Klopstock, incomparably its brightest ornament: and whose eminent services as a poet, a thorough master of the language, and a profound critic, in spite of occasional mistakes, constitute him an authority, as regards insight into the genius of the German tongue, not a whit inferior to Adelung himself.

How relative is the idea of a Golden Age, at least as far as our literature is concerned! The disposition is always to put it in the past, as is confirmed by the example of a writer belonging to a period so enviable and happy. In one of his poems Gottsched declares the happy Golden Age to have been that of Frederick, the first King of Prussia. The writers of that time—supposed to stand in the same classic relations to the literature of Germany as Virgil did to that of Rome, Corneille and Racine to that of France—are more especially Besser, Henkirch, and Pietsch. These names, long consigned to oblivion, were perhaps in their own day scarcely so popular as Gottsched's eulogium might lead one to infer. However, he was himself so fully convinced that in them the human intellect attained its culminating point, and German poetry its highest glory, as to fancy that the age was on the wane and that some

* A district of Saxony, bounded on the east and south by the "Schandaner" chain, on the north and west by a valley of uncommon fertility. It is intersected by the Elbe, the Elster, and other important rivers.—*Transl. Note.*

slight decline of purity of taste had already become perceptible. These words were penned in 1751, the very year in which the first cantos of the Messiah appeared: a composition that, in my estimation, rather introduces, if not the Golden Age of excellence, at least a new era in German literature. The poets of the first generation who, as I have stated above, really contributed to raise the tone of our literature, and were partly known to fame previous to Klopstock's day, for the most part only wrote songs and lyrics of a mixed species. Compositions such as these, however they may tend to embellish a literature possessed of other and more solid advantages, cannot possibly form its lasting basis. For this purpose some great national work of earnest import is required, be it historic or epic poetry, which constitutes the most felicitous commencement of a national literature. It is true that German writers of the first generation, as a whole, devoted careful attention to purity of diction, inasmuch as this was demanded, in an especial manner, by existing circumstances. But the results were far from being uniformly successful; in confirmation of which I need hardly allude to the great discrepancy between Klopstock's prose and his poetical expression, or the immense inferiorty of Lessing's earlier productions, which fall within that period, to his later style of composition. It is evident, then, that even as regards development of language, it is difficult to assume any precise privileged period of German literature. I would undertake to enumerate works composed in the interval from 1750 to 1800, year by year, all of them more or less valuable and excellent: but it would be impossible to point to any enjoying a total exemption from every defect of that kind. On the same principle, very popular authors have in all ages furnished abundant examples of negligent as well as faulty style.

There is a much more useful arrangement or division of German literature than any which we have had occasion to name. If the same be reviewed historically within the above-mentioned period, extending from 1750 to 1800, an epoch unquestionably very fertile in excellent writers, the several generations, so to speak, may be clearly distinguished. It is the more important thoroughly to comprehend this distinction, that each separate generation is

characterized by some peculiar excellence or defect arising out of the external relations of the times. This should be borne in mind, in order that we may not look for certain qualities in an author which are incompatible with contemporary circumstances, or charge him with failings common to the age in which he flourished.

In the first generation I would include those the development of whose genius and early activity ranges from 1750—1770. Poets of the highest repute belonging to this period I have already noticed. The limits of these lectures preclude my mentioning each individual name that enjoyed a certain degree of distinction. In reference to our own Austria,* I may here state that Denis, a learned Jesuit, added to his other useful labours that of introducing a pure system of philology, with especial regard to Klopstock's severe taste, into his adopted country, the Empire, then blooming afresh under the sceptre of Maria Theresa after overcoming a thousand perils. Hence the spirit of Klopstock's genius, too soon extinct in the rest of Germany, long survived in the Imperial dominions as a standard model of German and Parnassian pursuits.

Of prose writers incidental to this first generation there are several philosophers to be duly considered hereafter: for instance, Kant, as far as the period of his birth and his early literary efforts are concerned; but especially Lessing and Winckelmann. Hamann likewise chronologically belongs to this first epoch; but with his divining depth of thought he stands as a literary hermit. His peculiar religious bias, of itself strange enough, was rendered still more impervious to his contemporaries by the impenetrable obscurity of the figurative allusions in which his sibylline leaves and hieroglyphic signs were enveloped. It was reserved for subsequent years to raise the mystic veil and, in some measure, recognize their originality and genius, after the German mind had undergone some discipline and training.†

* Though Schlegel was born in Hanover, he spent the latter portion of his life in Austria: the present series of Lectures having been delivered in Vienna.—*Transl. Note.*

† J. G. Hamann, a native of Koenigsberg; his disposition was exceedingly fickle, after having been successively engaged in theological, legal, and political pursuits, he entered upon commerce, which, in its turn, soon

Authors of this first generation are commonly impressed with many features characteristic of the unfavourable condition of German language and art, as they then existed; and they bear frequent testimony to the arduous struggle with internal and external difficulties in which both were engaged. His letters, which have been divulged perhaps with too little regard for his memory, disclose the nature of the contest as bearing upon Winckelmann, from which his first public performances emerge with some degree of success. Kant never entirely shook off the effects of this inner conflict, at once tedious, severe, laborious. Lessing's youthful attempts, especially the poetical, can only be regarded as a tribute that even genius is wont to render, in one way or another, to the age in which it appears. With the single exception of Klopstock, the poets of that day too frequently transport the fancy to the obsolete period of occasional poems and verses written by command. As a poet, Klopstock's development was most free and rapid; yet in his case, too, it is doubtful if, in selecting his materials and fixing his plan, he would not have avoided many errors for which not even the most glorious execution can compensate, had he not been compelled to open up a new course for the progress of his muse. In other words, if available preliminary labours had existed in a similar, or at least kindred, branch of inquiry, dating from a period not too remote for present purposes. These were some of the injurious consequences which the writers of the first generation encountered, simply because they were the first to succeed to a most unfavourable condition of German literature. External disadvantages of position, however, whilst they oppress the weak, only serve to stimulate strong minds to more powerful exertion. Every nerve is then strained to bear upon the object of a lofty enthusiasm, which calls forth a life-long energy. In addition to Klopstock, Winckelmann, and, in a peculiar manner, Kant, display this peculiar concentration of power. Subsequently our literature, particularly our poetry, was

disgusted him. He then took a fit of travelling, he visited Berlin, Switzerland, London, &c., &c. His writings, which mostly reflected the strangeness of his genius, were collected by Jacobi, Herder, and Goethe. The appellation of "Wizard of the North" was frequently bestowed on him.—*Transl. Note.*

too much dismembered and dispersed with inconceivable levity. Their severity of purpose and their lofty enthusiasm constituted the leading minds of the first generation the actual founders of modern German literature. In the same rank with Klopstock and Lessing, Winckelmann must essentially be classed, who mainly introduced that taste for the beautiful in Art which, perhaps somewhat too exclusively, became a predominant characteristic of this literature. Since his time, artistic and æsthetical views almost monopolized the field of German literary and philosophic criticism, even under circumstances rather calculated to call forth the exercise of national or religious feeling.

The great moral aud political commotion, engraven in the annals of universal history and customarily designated the *Revolution*, because its more violent throes were felt during that period, has indeed roused the intellect of Germany from its æsthetic world of dreams, and sternly pointed to an earnest reality of existence in the conflict of Time, as also to the still more serious concerns of eternal faith. With difficulty do the first rays of light find their way through the chinks and crannies of revolutionary confusion, and by slow degrees pierce the lingering mists of a bygone age. This struggle, in our own immediate times, as it shaped its course in the domains of intellect, of literature, and of science—especially German—is the last great phenomenon, with a description of which we intend closing the present series of remarks.

LECTURE XVI.

General Survey.—Epoch of Genial Literature.—Direction of Poetry to Nature and the Living Reality of the Present. — German Criticism. — Lessing and Herder: Prevalent Æsthetics. — Lesing as a Philosopher: Freedom of Thought and the Illuminati: the Emperor Joseph II.—Character of the third Generation: Philosophy of Kant.—Goethe and Schiller.—Future Prospects.—Fichte and Tieck.—Real Character of German Literature.—Comprehensive Idea of the Present Era.

The modern literature of Germany is deficient in true harmony. It would not perhaps be very difficult to state in general terms, in what department this desideratum is to be sought, and wherein it can reasonably be expected to be found. But where would be the advantage in proposing a distant goal without at the same time indicating the paths that lead to it, together with each seductive devious by-path, and every difficulty the pilgrim is likely to encounter even when his course is in the right direction? Previous to attempting a solution of the problem, it is desirable to comprehend the problem itself in its manifold variety: and if we would hope to untie this Gordian knot of our literature, we must trace the several threads that combine to produce so perplexed and intricate a whole.

To this purpose the present series of historical remarks is meant to be subservient; as we approach nearer our own times we must needs dwell less on individual characteristics and more especially restrict our consideration to the collective development and dominant genius of literature. The time has, perhaps, not yet arrived for a complete history of modern German literature. Points here and there will only then appear in their true colours when the results shall have been more completely developed. Materials are yet wanting to render the history of the intellectual culture of Germany perfect and complete.

I have already attempted to pourtray the foremost poets of the first generation. Of philosophers and prose writers generally I purpose still to defer the consideration, that I may pursue my subject with all possible chronological fidelity: inasmuch as the views of Lessing and Kant, two of the most important of this class, did not practically influence public opinion till a somewhat later period.

When the long feuds between Austria and Prussia had at last issued in permanent peace, Germany long enjoyed a repose no less favourable to the progress of science and mental culture than to the restoration of political and social stability. At one time, indeed, this repose was for a moment menaced, but the storm passed over, and Germany flourished in the enjoyment of peace and energetic power, though she was not altogether clearly conscious of the true causes on which her happy condition depended.

The first founders of German literature, as regards purity of diction and poetry, whose exertions, partly before, partly after Klopstock, tended to the same end, had to contend with the most serious obstacles in a much less favourable external state of things. Many of these they had overcome by dint of great and ever memorable exertions; they had paved the way, and their very misconceptions and defects could not fail to be instructive to ingenious successors, necessarily serving as a preliminary step to further perfection.

It need not, then, be a matter of surprise to observe the second generation of German poets and writers, whose first development for the most part belongs to the period of 1770, take a bolder flight with infinitely greater facility. They reaped the fruits of what had been sown by their predecessors. The most distinguished poets of this epoch are Goethe, Stolberg, Voss, and Bürger: to these might be added the names of others whose verse, distinguished by genius, appeared somewhere about this time, though, owing to the nature of their composition or other circumstances, they never attained equal celebrity. In addition to these genuine poets, there were some who boldly assumed genial faculties which they never possessed, and thus had well nigh brought into discredit the reputation and genius of the age, if it were possible for genius ever to suffer from such pretensions. But in order to be convinced

of the real intellectual prosperity of Germany during the period in question, it is sufficient to recall the names of Jacobi, Lavater, Herder, and Johannes Müller, men whose first development and the character of whose writings especially belong to this epoch: their fame is not confined to Germany, but is spread throughout Europe. In spirit and manner, as also in language and style, the authors of this second generation differ widely from those of the preceding. Their style is full of soul, fire, and animation: it is ingenious, enthusiastic and witty: ever original and fresh, and often artistic in detail. Still, uniformity of plan, severe strictness of arrangement, judicious design, are frequently wanting in their composition, whilst the care necessary to ensure purity and correctness of diction is not always observed. This applies even to Herder and Johannes Müller, the best informed, most versatile and practised writers of the age in which they lived. The assertion made by the admirers of the first epoch, that purity of language existed, if not exclusively, yet in a very high degree, among its writers, would almost seem to be justified in fact. The principle does not, however, admit of universal application: some authors, more especially the poets, Voss, Stolberg, and Goethe in many of his works, evince an elegance and propriety of diction not exceeded by the severe perfection of any poet or prose-writer belonging to the former generation. The elaborate care of Voss occasionally induces hardness and becomes painful to the reader: and though instances of negligence of expression may be detected in some passages of Goethe's lighter productions, his noblest poems evince a beauty of language unsurpassed in the annals of German literature, blended with an artless grace which Klopstock himself could never attain.

Not only was the language enriched and embellished by the genius of these writers and poets who, entering on the path traced out by their predecessors, ventured on a bolder flight: in individual compositions it was represented in immaculate purity and lovely perfection. Poetry now took a new direction. It had previously been divided into two sections or parties, according as the poet proposed to take Wieland or Klopstock for his model. The verse of the one was crowded with muses and graces, loves and roses,

amorettes and zephyrs, nymphs, dryads, hamadryads. The others sought to catch the echo of olden Bardic song on ice-bound regions, or at a bear hunt amid rocks and savage cliffs, or they walked with Eloah through the clouds on celestial paths strewn with stars: if ever they descended to earth it was amid thunder, lightning, and tempest, like the last trump. Between these two extremes of an uniform elevation and a luscious half-Greek half-modern effeminacy, more recent poets aimed at depicting reality and nature in all their force. They sought to unite their verse with the reality of the present by direct means, for they felt that individual, fragmentary, yet powerful sketches, in the very spirit of life, were exactly congenial to the essence of the muse. They all exerted themselves to catch the peculiar inspiration of Homer as the master-poet of living nature, and vied with each other in reproducing him in a German garb. They likewise recalled numerous reminiscences of olden German history, art, and song: of course a sufficiently accurate acquaintance with old-German history and mode of thought, with language and art, was not on all occasions combined with their endeavours. These were for the most part echoes admirable in themselves and beneficial in their consequences. *Goetz von Berlichingen with the Iron Hand*,* alone became the progenitor of an all but countless race of chivalrous mailed knights, who to this day maintain old German freedom and noble prowess on the stage. However devoid of rule and even of form this work was thrown off by the author, not in mere youthful levity but seemingly with design, however imperfectly the historical features of the age it describes may be delineated, still it remains a rich poetic picture of permanent value; more so than any other of the poet's youthful productions, in which the poetry was attached to the passing hour.

Upon the whole, perhaps, Poetry was too much diverted by this novel direction of her energies from the high standard set up by Klopstock: and, gradually becoming scattered and isolated, it was drawn too far into the sphere of reality, and thus, by direct pressure, forced prematurely and too exclusively upon the stage. The happy develop-

* Translated by H. G. Bohn in his "Standard Library."

ment and prosperity of the stage would seem in all countries to depend on the full maturity of the several processes of intermediate culture. The Greek theatre probably derived its main excellence from this circumstance. Scarcely can success be expected of the stage in any country unless literature and poetry, especially the more exalted kind, have been previously rendered productive in manifold ways, thus laying the foundations of a lofty superstructure of genius and art. A happy commencement in reference to the theatre may be said to have been made in Germany at that time, but the project was by no means realized, nor was the state of public opinion in entire harmony with it. Lessing's tone of criticism incidentally contributed to direct universal attention to the stage. It is difficult to decide if the spirit of his criticism was calculated to operate in a salutary manner on the stage of his country, notwithstanding the vast extent of his acquirements and his unquestionable sagacity. From heavy translations of Corneille or Voltaire the general taste now turned to moral domestic sketches after the manner of Diderot: and prose came to be regarded as an essential to genuine natural delineation, so that the language, freed from all restraint, might thoroughly correspond with the formless nature of the contents. This feeling, however, was but transitory: Shakspere, revered by Lessing, continued to be the idol of the nation, and popular conceptions of what constituted natural representation soon outgrew the standard of Diderot and his family sketches.

As a critic, Lessing was better adapted to throw light upon individual points, and particularly to refute and eradicate deep-seated prejudices than to mark the precise position of any work of art, of any single artist, or of any collective species, in relation to general culture or the several gradations of art. His pursuits did not fit him to contemplate or admire a work of high perfection with the philosophic repose of Winckelmann. But this is indispensable to a knowledge, both essential and complete, of any distinct species of art in reference to its entire history and development. It is only in complete works that the essence of an art can be fully known, and only by means of calm consideration can perfection be recognized: censure of parts of the whole, or of imperfect execution, cannot lead to results equally desirable.

Lessing's criticism turns on the principle, rather than on the characteristics of perfection; and is more engaged in refuting error than in establishing truth. In criticism, too, he is more the philosopher than the student of art. He wants that pliancy of the imagination with which Herder transports himself into the poetry of all ages and nations. In the philosophy of history it is this keen relish of the poetical element in the character of national legend, that gift of realizing to his fancy the most varied modes of life and thought which he of all others so eminently possessed, that constitute such distinctive features of Herder's genius: as a theologian, he was especially captivated by the poetry of the Hebrews. He might almost be styled the mythologist of our literature, on account of this manifold poetic sense, this gift of appreciating ancient legends, and the sympathy with which he conceived all possible shapes and beings of airy fancy: endowments in themselves arguing the possession of a high degree of imagination. We must not, however, look for critical accuracy or philosophic and religious depth from this thinker who, though endowed with genius, fancy, and feeling, naturally inclined, after all, to æsthetics. Himself keenly alive to every phase of imagination, he succeeded in creating a general taste for ancient legend and mythology. But in order to gather the deeper sense of mythology and antique symbol, and to extract the genuine essence of their imagery from the surrounding elements of fable, a deeper knowledge of philosophy and religion is needful: just as the varied play of colours, in all their manifold refractions, can alone be significantly determined by examining the principles of light itself. In the absence of this enlightening ray, the study of legendary mythology leads but to scientific fanciful imaginings blended with indefinite perceptions, such as Herder was the means of introducing into the arena of history and philology. He never climbed the heights of religious elevation, but contented himself with following the bent of his native talents and artistic sense, thus materially contributing to confirm and expand the innate tendencies of the German mind. It is to be regretted that he forsook his earlier path, viz., that of regarding primitive revelation as the key to all philosophy, legend, tradition, and mythology, and that later

in life he sank into the fashionable taste for a vapid enlightenment.

Upon the whole, more artistic and æsthetic views have prevailed in every direction since Winckelmann became a recognized authority. With this not only did the natural inclination of German genius to art and poesy co-operate, but likewise the isolation of the great majority of gifted men from any public sphere of activity. The German mind, for the most part, had to choose between two alternatives: inner activity removed from the offices of social and civil duty, or artistic and poetic functions resuming their connection with the social compact in after years. At first, the former of these two was in the ascendant, even to the prejudice of the latter: since many writers, having devoted the greater portion of their attention to a consideration of the principles of art and their practical employment, had not sufficiently cultivated a taste for philosophic pursuits to be enabled to turn it to advantage. Even in Winckelmann this taste is obvious: his lofty artistic ideas are all based on platonic enthusiasm drawn from the source, and permeating his entire system. Of all philosophic models, this harmonizes most completely with a contemplation of high art: yet his inner-current of platonism was occasionally so strong as completely to lift him above all contemplation of art. His later writings evince this philosophic tendency in a more marked and especial manner, and I am not satisfied that it would not have been an accession to German philosophy if it had been inaugurated by a Platonist such as Winckelmann was calculated to have been.

When his mind attained to maturity, Lessing abandoned those antiquarian researches as well as theatrical and artistic criticism, which had been the cherished occupations of earlier years, as though they were mere juvenile occupations. A philosophic investigation of truth constituted the object of all his later endeavours, on which he brought to bear a spirit of earnest enthusiasm such as had characterized none of his previous undertakings. To shine in these had once been alike his pride and his delight: in their pursuit he seemed to have been desirous of testing the powers of his general fancy, especially against feebler opponents, rather than of advocating the cause itself, on its intrinsic merits or from

deliberate choice. However much it may have been a necessity of his nature to practise his powers in the manifold spheres of art and genius, philosophy was unquestionably his calling. He was so far in advance of his age as to be universally understood, the more so, that his philosophy was never fully matured or developed: his want of system causing his indirect and casual declarations to resemble sketchy outlines rather than a perfect picture.

Of the philosophers of the older school, Sulzer especially confined his inquiry to artistic subjects, in accordance with the prevalent tastes of the time: Mendelssohn sought to establish the general truths of religion on a philosophical basis: Garve, though not exactly a follower of Leibnitz, nevertheless may be classed with that generation in reference to his general style. He devoted himself to the moral philosophy of England and of the ancients: the result sufficed to prove that a theory of life founded on probabilities and presumptions, in the absence of a profounder recognition of what is true and certain in itself, could not satisfy the German mind. The philosophic romances of Wieland contributed to the dissemination of a system of morals, in Socratic guise, but based on the tenets of Epicurus, particularly among the higher classes of society, not without injurious consequences to public opinion; at least, it may be said that a too indulgent and effeminate moral code was not the most fitting preparation for the arduous struggle that impended over the nation and the age.

The fame of Kant was not yet in its zenith. In reserved seclusion, Lavater pursued his own peculiar course of study. His views on physiognomy have been held up to ridicule, whilst some of his conceptions procured for him the appellation of a dreamy enthusiast. The philosophic penetration of his mind has been altogether misconstrued: the fragmentary expression of his method subjected him to disadvantages, for his living faith was foreign to the scholastic philosophy of his time. He is, in my opinion, one of the most admirable and remarkable inquirers after truth in the eighteenth century next to Hamann and Lessing. These three solitary thinkers constitute an isolated circle, equally removed from the rancorous sectarianism of contending faction, and the formulas of the schools: in which we may

discern the first germs of a Christian philosophy. Hamann delineated the Word of primitive revelation as an enigma yet awaiting solution: his voice was unheeded in the desert of general illumination. The profundity of Lavater conceived the truths of Christianity as the focal point of ideal knowledge. The third addition to these unconscious spiritualists and independent Christian thinkers of Germany is the great name of Lessing, whose clear-sighted intellect penetrated to the very turning-points of revelation and knowledge, tradition and freedom of thought.

The writings of Reimarus, of the older school, in support of the connection subsisting between natural religion and human reason, are of the ordinary kind. But his systematic attack on revealed religion proved of incomparably greater importance in their results. Lessing, who entered upon historical investigation with an earnest wish to probe it to the bottom, thought it desirable to give every publicity to the attack made. It was his conviction that the time had come when it was advisable no longer to suppress any doubts, but rather to court their expression, in order that they might be answered and the truth be brought to light. Lessing's philosophy was directed straight to the mark, namely, the truth of religion. Usual questions and discussions, incidental to the philosophy of the age, and in which its energies were wont to be tired out ever since the days of Descartes and Locke, had no interest for him. On the other hand, his "Education of Humanity," and "Freemasons' Dialogues," as, indeed, all his philosophic polemics, touched upon points intimately connected with the principal themes of sublime philosophy, but which had almost escaped the critical notice of the age. As regards philosophy, he had quite outgrown the standard of the eighteenth century. Of those who may be classed in approximate rank, Leibnitz was the only one who at all approached his lofty proportions; and him he considered as at a great distance from those who called themselves his followers: he understood him better than any of them, because he had studied Spinoza. If that metaphysical system deserves to be called superficial, which not only cannot refute the greatest of its opponents, but would fain shun and ignore him, it cannot be denied that Lessing penetrated further than Kant, though not so systematically, into

the deep places of philosophy. Had his career terminated less prematurely, had he been more sparing of his powers, and more regular in their application, the results would have incontestably proved that this was the case. The development of German philosophy would have probably been more felicitous if Lessing's independent and bold spirit had co-operated in its extension, than was subsequently the case through the sole agency of Kant. Lessing scarcely ever publicly promulgated his own philosophic theories: all that he incidentally let fall bore the appearance of extraordinary paradox. But he was no actual disciple of Spinoza, as was asserted after his death, except in so far as an inquirer may, in the course of his speculations, happen to incline to some particular fallacy, which he is not yet in a position to refute, and which is perhaps destined to serve him as a bridge to the truth. The most decisive proof of this is his adherence to the doctrine of transmigration of souls: of all his favourite theories this appeared to be the most deeply rooted. But this doctrine is not in harmony with Spinoza's system which repudiates all change of individuals, as also their personal after-existence. This circumstance, then, warrants the supposition that Lessing was especially attached to the older oriental philosophy, and he himself furnishes convincing proof of it. It would almost seem as though they were right who hold that too much care can hardly be taken to guard against the dangers of enthusiasm. Since neither the vast acquirements of Leibnitz, nor the perspicuous intellect of Lessing availed to emancipate either of them from the thraldom of enthusiasm, as it is designated by those critics; it would thus appear to be difficult to escape its influence at a certain degree of mental elevation.

Yet little of this secret enthusiasm on the part of a single spirited inquirer really infected general opinion. His doubts and the example of his boldness operated more powerfully as well as extensively: without intending it, he assisted the very system so repugnant to his tastes, and so often embattled by him. In a certain sense, Lessing finished what Luther had commenced: as a critical investigator he completed the work of German Protestantism, and led the way to the impending crisis. So, at a more recent period, and in the path of independent scientific thought, Fichte pursued

the Protestant principle of freedom, and as an uncompromising idealist reached the pinnacle of finished Protestantism in this direction. Hence the activity of the human mind naturally suffered a revulsion: returning from the self-constituted abyss of unlimited thought to the recognition of revelation or a Divine positive, though this could not be effected without constant contradiction, and deceptive remains of ancient error, with frequent relapse. As a definite system, Protestantism in Germany could not co-exist with unlimited freedom of thought, neither could it endure in religion or science subsequent to the crisis mainly brought about by Lessing. Since Fichte elevated independent thought to ideal heights, an experiment that left the mind unsatisfied, science has more and more returned to positive principles in nature, in history, and in tradition, frequently not without the admixture of various errors. As regards faith, the crisis mentioned above was the means of substituting an essentially individual religion of the feelings among pious Protestants in place of the older system no longer tenable. The bold freedom of his inquiry reconducted Lessing himself to a belief in the most ancient philosophy, and to a recognition of the legitimate authority of tradition in the Church.

The immediate influence of Lessing throughout Protestant Germany was, accordingly, of a destructive character. If this total dissolution of the then mode of thinking and of Protestant faith was to be attended by beneficial results hereafter: if the bulwarks of Truth were to be razed merely to found a more lasting structure and plant a creed on the congenial soil of conviction and deep feeling, can alone be decided by the progress of years. At any rate, the direct effects were of a varied nature. The recognized freedom of thought was far less directed to the promotion of scientific discoveries and researches than to destructive purposes. There seemed to be a general desire to eradicate prejudice under the insinuating guise of Illuminism. In many instances, involving interests of little moment and easily decided, this really happened. But to cases in which important principles were at stake, no fixed standard was ever applied in order to discriminate between prejudice and truth, faith and infidelity. Some idea of the manifold abuses to

which the new mode was liable, as well as the immense variety of inconsistent principles it entailed, may be gathered from a comparison of the construction put upon independent thought and Illuminism by that profound thinker and honest doubter, the philosophic Lessing, with the views entertained by Basedow, Nikolai, and Weisshaupt. It has already been shewn that the same persons who fiercely advocated toleration were themselves most intolerant towards those whose opinions chanced to differ from their own. Yet this is, perhaps, too general a feature of human weakness to be made the subject of especial reproach. If scepticism, infidelity, and systematic disinclination to religion were not as open and shameless in Germany as in France, or, in individual instances, in England, the very moderation of temperate infidelity, so flattering to human reason and so gentle in its attack on faith and the feelings, contributed not a little to disseminate it both rapidly and extensively. Of the writers who were not carried away by the current of thought as it then set in, but secretly influenced that period as Christian thinkers, Jung-Stilling and Stark deserve especial mention. The former of these, in the direction of internal Christianity, aroused a deeper religious feeling among Protestants with freer individual views; and the latter has expressed in his writings, in the most positive manner, his conviction of the truth of the Catholic faith. To these gifted names may be added that of Claudius, whose lucid embodiment of the deeper mysteries of Christianity, in the cheerful garb of popular works adapted to the young, was at once admirable and successful.

Let us briefly glance at the external condition of intellectual development during that epoch. Peace and prosperity in Germany were no less favourable to general mental culture than to the diffusion of a novel system of thought. Although science and art cannot everywhere be said to have met with positive or even sufficient encouragement, yet it could not but be a matter of congratulation and self-respect that towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and later, Germany boasted of a greater number of distinguished sovereigns than all the rest of Europe. Frederick and Maria Theresa, in different ways, constituted the just pride of their people: whilst the Emperor Joseph gave promise of

still greater glory. He realized those fond expectations by an illustrious and memorable reign. In regard to natural culture of art and intellect, the patriotic hopes of Klopstock were once more doomed to disappointment. As his sceptre swayed the destinies of many important countries beyond the territories of Germany, it might have been expected that Joseph II. would found some comprehensive scientific institute embracing the intellectual interests of Europe generally rather than those of Germany alone. Had he done so he would doubtless not merely have consulted the advantage of his own dominions, but have influenced very considerably the subsequent progress of public opinion and the entire development of the age. The Emperor, however, paid especial attention to the practical development of science. Not that he ever underrated science generally, for the value he set upon many legislative, judicial, and financial theories of the age then in vogue, long since exploded as impracticable hypotheses at the best, was far more than they deserved. However natural it may seem that an active sovereign should incline to a practical view of science, still the example just quoted ought not to regulate the conduct of future monarchs. It being now a principle universally recognized as sound, that the intellectual culture of a nation is no less important to the state and to its ruler than physical power or external splendour, it follows that everything which tends to advance the former, even without reference to immediate utility, is in itself deserving of consideration.

I now proceed to the third generation of modern German literature, which differs widely from the two preceding ones. To have a clear conception of the German character of these several epochs is the surest means of solving apparent contradictions, and reconciling opinions seemingly inconsistent, by explaining misconstruction, and placing certain peculiarities in their true light: provided always there be no essential radical difference in the mode of thought. It frequently happens that external relations and the dominant spirit of the age, witnessing the early development and culture of a writer mould his leading characteristics: in every case, they materially influence the whole of his subsequent career.

The third generation comprises all those writers whose development and culture date from 1780 or 1790. Here, too,

external relations and the genius of the age exercised a remarkable and decided influence over German literature: an influence not confined to authors, but extending to the general public. Formerly, the public appealed to by German poets and writers, consisted for the most part of a select number of art-amateurs and scattered dilletanti. It was so when Klopstock and his contemporaries flourished: by slow degrees the little band waxed in numbers and importance. The revolution was favourable to the increase of writers on the one hand, and of readers on the other: from the arena of politics men turned their attention to the domains of philosophy, and of literature generally. How injurious soever the results of this revolution may have occasionally proved, universal sympathy could not fail to be aroused, and if partizanship was carried to greater lengths, it was still a gain to intellectual energy which often derives great accession of power from the excitement of a contest. Were I desirous of applying a comprehensive epithet to this epoch, without hazarding misconstruction, I should be disposed to designate it *the revolutionary period:* if I may be allowed to adopt the expression in a sense deviating somewhat from its common usage. And yet it should be remembered to the credit of German writers as a whole, that at least the first and more eminent of their number were free from all democratic taint of the early revolutionary period. Forster alone requires our sympathy, who misled by others and self-deluded, perished in the eddying vortex: a loss to literature and the world at large. If some leading minds were not altogether free from sharing the deceitful hopes of the age, their sense of right soon came to the rescue, and they made rich amends for transient error. I use the term, then, in the sense of that admirable saying "Burke wrote a revolutionary book against the revolution." The remark is to be understood thus: he delineated the convulsions of the age in terms of such transcendent eloquence, and so fully perceived the dangers and the magnitude of the impending struggle, that he himself was thrown into a state of contagious violence when he composed his book. It is this condition of external, but still more internal, struggle that I regard as the genuine characteristics of poets and writers who belonged to this third generation. To justify and illustrate my opinion, it is only necessary

for me to point to a distinguished writer and poet of this epoch, whose memorable career is already displayed to our view in its full extent. In the impassioned productions of his early prime, we see Schiller incessantly convulsed by the conflict of inner emotions: he is urged onwards by the enthusiastic hopes to improve the existing state of all things, a species of opposition distinctively preceding the revolution. Some of his youthful poems give vent to his doubts in strains the most passionate: but this scepticism, coupled with the lofty earnest and fiery glow of a youthful heart, if it deserve reproof yet enlists our sympathy, and not unreasonably excites a hope that so mighty an aspiration after Truth in so manly a bosom, could not long remain unsatisfied. How violent the transitions in Schiller's riper years: how constant the struggle with himself and the world, with the philosophy of the age and his own art! Restless and sensitive, he is here and there seized with the giddiness arising from external convulsion. This it is that I would convey in the expression employed above, and which I remark more or less in all distinguished authors of that epoch.

The poets and genial writers of the second generation lived in a state of security which almost seems marvellous in our eyes, accustomed as we are to detect the first symptoms of approaching danger and convulsion in their time. But they were indifferent not only to all political relations and events, but also to the external aspect of the world in general, living on in undisturbed enjoyment of their artistic and genial faculties. Johannes Müller forms the the sole exception; his mind, intent upon these themes, from the solitary grandeur of Alpine heights, naturally discerned the gathering storm both sooner and with more unerring vision than the inhabitants of peaceful dales or of too busy cities. Instead of this artistic blissful repose, we see the writers of the succeeding generation, from 1780-90, absorbed in passing events: devoted to the interests of the age, heart and soul, their entire activity was directed to the raging conflict. I will only instance one or two extreme cases in point. By what other means did the most popular, indispensable, and copious of all writers of that period, become a necessity of it, the wonted appliance as it were of a time-beguiling em-

dium, than just these, that he knew how to address himself to the sympathy of the age, and to gain possession of it? A curious example, and instructive to future times in reference to social degeneracy and a decline of taste. The opposite extreme of this adroit appeal to temporary infirmity is exhibited by that celebrated philosopher, who fancied he had discovered in *self* the secret of Archimedes to move the world and revolutionize the age. A third illustration indicative of the relation of the writer to his times, is furnished by one who constitutes a medium between pampering the infirmities of the age and boldly undertaking to set all matters right, single-handed and with arbitrary powers. That humourous national favourite, who owed his reputation to the happy tact with which he managed to display all the varied fertility of so perplexed a season, its echoes and its want of harmony, with such copious wit, pathos, and characteristic humour, and in so mixed a consonant dissonant style as to form a striking portraiture of the several features of the age, in the whole extent of its vast chaotic resources.

The faults incidental to writers participating in this revolution of the intellect may justly be charged against the thinkers and poets above-named. Yet this ought not to exclude Schiller, Fichte, and others, who spent their best energies on art and science, and who after manfully fighting the battle of their time, contributed largely to the important work of development, from receiving the meed of honour due to their mental faculties and their essential merits.

Others, turning away from directly confronting the chaotic state of existing humanity, betook themselves to the realms of fancy, with whose pleasurable delights they disported: or threw themselves into the arms of nature, contemplating her scientifically without any reference to mankind. Inquirers of another class fastened with enthusiasm on the heroism of the past, and transported with rapture hoped to find in that a solution of the enigmatic present. The most eminent of the number, dissatisfied with the external world and with the aspect of science, returned to the consideration of religion, which had well-nigh outgrown the memories of the age, and to Christianity so long misinterpreted. Here too, individual instances of error and misconception were not wanting: but the absence of moral courage and

of necessary decision of character, in order to exemplify by deeds and openly avow the truth when inwardly recognized, was still more conspicuous. Few honest well-disposed persons will doubt that, after all, this failing of the age and of ourselves can be supplied by no other means. But the agreement of those who have found the Truth again, and know and love Christianity among the Protestants, or of those who seek it and approach it among the Philosophers, with those who have adhered to the Catholic centre, will always be developed more fully for every great thing which forms an epoch, unfolds itself only by an uniform breaking forth of many individual forces.

The picture is scarcely perceptible of further details: it being difficult to depict our own times. Whenever an external contest rages in some field of human activity, be it civil or spiritual, the more fierce the contest grows the more likely is it that none of the combatants are altogether in the right. For those who are most so will, nevertheless, be chargeable with some element of error. This is a necessary concomitant of chaotic confusion. In reference to art and the practical development of intellect, the greater the internal conflict, the more excellent, occasionally, are its visible productions. I need only direct attention to the immense gap between the *Robbers*, *Don Carlos*, and *Wallenstein*,* in the respective gradations of Schiller's genius. On the whole, it may be said that harmonious perfection and beauty are not the fruits of internal mental conflict, so long as it endures: but it is calculated to develop great fertility of thought. Prolific invention essentially constitutes the distinctive feature of the third generation of German literature: a distinction which other nations were by no means slow to recognize. Yet even this period is embellished by individual compositions that may fairly be cited as specimens not only of finished art, but also of harmonious animated feeling, and great beauty of expression. In the main, however, as has already been said, fragmentary ideal wealth is the predominant characteristic of our epoch, harmonious finishing forming the rare exception.

Though we may be of opinion that a general amnesty should be extended to this struggling period of our literature, as equally necessary to all parties concerned: and

* All translated in Bohn's edition of Schiller's works.

though a preference may be given to the more successful poets of the first and second generation in regard to artistic elegance and beauty of diction: the ideality which marks the third epoch confers upon it a singular distinction, and he whose mental culture dates from 1788-1802, despite many injurious circumstances, will not readily exchange his privileges for those of the two preceding periods.

The philosophy of Kant had a most decided influence at this time. I do not believe that, on the whole, it exercised injurious effects on public thought and faith. The latter had already been convulsed to its very foundations by other agencies. If the doubts of some were now increased or first excited, their earnestness and depth of feeling proved a sufficient counteracting remedy. This was not to be sought for among the dilapidated ruins of so-called Rationalism: independently of that, Kant's philosophy contained many varied suggestions calculated to guide the earnest student to the path of sublime conviction from which he may have strayed.* When it is remembered that even in Germany, the philosophy of the age had materially sapped belief in all high contemplations: the system of Kant will be found rather to have operated beneficially, bridging the Truth to some, or, at the least, pointing in the right direction. It is to be regretted that this philosophy so soon sank to the level of sectarianism. Yet this was a transitory evil, as also barbarism of expression. Kant's own style here and there bears a characteristic impress, a certain peculiarity, combining genius and wit with philosophic penetration. On the whole, however, and especially in the structure of his periods, his composition uniformly betrays a spirit laboriously toiling after Truth, yet tossed to and fro by doubts. Hence arose his infelicitous terminology. That barbarism and the cipher-language of philosophy have now for the most part disappeared: but few distinguished writers retain any traces of it, and that from a want of due care. Several compositions of a later period might be cited as perfect models of expression.

Many of his predecessors' defects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recur in Kant's philosophy. He commences with the lifeless conceptions of Leibnitz in reference

* Kant's principal work is the "Kritik of Pure Reason," translated in Bohn's Standard Library.

to space and time, continually wavers between *self* and the external world of sense, like almost all philosophers from Descartes downwards, and eventually commits himself to experience, like Locke. But as experience is incompetent to pronounce an opinion upon morals and religion, he erects a system of rational faith out of the scattered fragments of rational knowledge, in a manner similar to the course of English philosophers. But since he had himself previously attacked the system of Reason, it had lost its credit with others and took no permanent hold. His moral philosophy had the merit of especially demonstrating the position to be assigned to practical reason in this department of human knowledge: still more forcibly than the example of the Stoics, the impossibility of establishing a fitting system of morals without the addition of other elements than those derived from practical reason. It sets forth in unmistakeable terms that such a system is not only unsatisfactory to humanity, but also totally inapplicable to many relations of life; leading to the strangest results even when most logically pursued. Men soon returned from this rigid and impracticable scheme of morals.

Kant's greatest merit consists in having established the point that Reason of itself is void and empty, valid only in its application to Experience, and what is within her province, and that hence it is not fitted to conduct to a knowledge of God or of divine things. Instead of acknowledging farther that these exalted subjects are to be approached only by means of inward perception and Divine revelation, and that sublime philosophy is an experimental science: instead of assigning to Reason, in the empire of supernatural Experience, the same secondary subordinate position, he enthroned Reason, disguised under the unsuitable mask of faith. Had he adopted olden simplicity, had he paved the way to inner perception and enlightened belief, in a spirit of scientific criticism, by means of Reason as subsidiary to Revelation, as it is to given facts in the realms of Experience, he might have become to philosophy what Bacon was to physics. Rescuing her from idle logomachies, he might have constituted her a sure, living, experimental science: in a word, he might have reinstated her in her legitimate authority.

But he ignored all inner perception, everything super-

sensuous, all save the vacuum of rational notions, bereft of every kind of matter. Involved in this lifeless and preposterous mode of thinking, he had no alternative but to resort to an artificial faith: for he could come to no choice or decision, owing to the continuous conflict of *self* and the external world of sense. His followers were bolder, since they referred all things to *self*, or betook thomselves wholly to the external world and the infinite power of Nature. The system of alleged pure Rationalism, which Kant would have destroyed, thus reappeared in two forms: in the shape of an artificial structure based on *self*, and as an unlimited world-science. This result was natural enough, inasmuch as Kant had not only passed over entirely the source of exalted Truth, but in revealing the inward contradiction and the emptiness of Reason, against whose arrogated supremacy he had himself contended, he had failed to reach the original foundations of the evil. We cannot, then, but cordially agree with Jacobi when he equally repudiates hollow Rationalism and absolute deification of Nature: though this latter tenet ought not justly to be charged against the more distinguished class of natural philosophers. Meanwhile, his own theory of consciousness, or of the moral sense unassisted by definite conceptions of faith—for he never could or would penetrate to the Divine positive principles of Christianity—remains quite as unsatisfactory. This philosopher's sceptical views of individual feeling, vacillating will, and uncertain consciousness, form a corresponding half to Kant's sceptical views of the intellect, without affording a better solution. Those two theories of doubt and total ignorance, together with Fichte's system of ideal reason, and the dynamic play of the Absolute or scientific delirium of natural philosophy unenlightened by Christian Revelation—form a complete and fourfold cycle. Although each of these four elementary powers is differently derived from a lifeless abstract consciousness, assuming the most varied shapes according to time and circumstance, the substratum of error is in the case of all essentially the same.

Further to pursue the principal phases of error issuing from the philosophy of Kant, and to explain the present development of German philosophy more minutely, would carry me beyond the limits of my present plan. Living poets, whose whole career is amply illustrated by a series of finished

productions, will be more fittingly described in an historic delineation of the most recent times. This is not the case with philosophers whose mode of thought is shiftingly developed, and whose system is yet in the process of formation. I will here simply remark in general terms that the profound inquiries which have been instituted in Germany since Kant's time, and the familiarized acquaintance with ancient philosophers—in regard to which as also to auxiliary and cognate branches of learning we enjoy advantages superior to those of other nations—have contributed to open up many paths for a return to Truth from every kind of error. The more so in the case of speculative errors, that their exhibition is manifest and complete. The entire system of actual error, in its several departments of false and scattered consciousness, being now fully exhausted by the great talents of those I have named, resulting in internecine destruction, the arena has been cleared, and men have begun to return once more to the gushing springs of living thought, to know God and Divine things in spirit and in truth. A return, such as this, from the errors introduced by Kant, has in several instances been realized. To adduce one of many examples, I need only cite the case of my deceased friend Hardenberg or Novalis. Not that he was the first to enter the sure path leading unto Truth and a knowledge of God, or to prepare the same for others, but the thoughts and fragments of poesy he bequeathed to posterity are so full of good seed, scattered in all directions with lavish profusion, as to warrant the hope that it may bring forth fruit, and conduce to the attainment of genuine love and true knowledge. Stollberg has unfolded the glories of his faith with a dignified simplicity and lucid beauty that resulted in peace to his own heart and imparted fresh vigour to his spirit. Many other honourable instances might be mentioned of distinguished talents adding the testimony of their conviction of the Truth, though all may not have possessed the philosophic fulness of Hardenberg, or the clear religious impressions of Stollberg, conveyed in his own gifted manner. Advances to the Truth are already met with on every side, and hopes may reasonably be entertained that the return will soon be general, and that German philosophy will yet come to be regarded as the champion and interpreter of Truth rather than its foe. It is vain to attempt to rally the followers of Kant under a novel disguise: the season of

empty formulas has passed away. Fichte and Jacobi at no time mustered a numerous band of adherents: the nature of their system prevented the formation of a sect: a re-establishment of the principles of either, under whatever shape, were a task equally hopeless. They have disappeared like meteors, or at most have served profound inquirers as intermediate steps in the ladder of investigation. Natural philosophers, too, now begin each to shape his own course, so that they can hardly be classified: absolute formulas vanish in the presence of positive fulness of principle, whilst this latter comes forth more clearly every day from Nature's secrets and the profundity of Revelation. A recognition of Revelation, and a knowledge of Christianity, are become increasing exigencies, so that in many cases it needs only a few steps further wholly to reject the turbid impurities of previous systems. On every occasion discrimination should be made between the person and the opinion, the confused multitude and select minds of a higher order, the obscurity of the external system and the lucid clearness of superior minds. But above all, care should be taken not to mistrust or disbelieve philosophy generally, because of some important misconceptions that still exist in German systems of belief. False philosophy can only be removed and supplanted by the genuine, which must, therefore, labour for the restoration of Truth, that great want of the age.

All who have devoted themselves to bear witness to the Truth, whether in the religious Faith, or in Christian Philosophy, or in both, are only single atoms of a higher Future. But who can any longer deny that the great reunion must be in the Faith itself, and then the other reunion, not less important, of Science and of Faith, will take place and be consummated where the discord began?

To return to the poets. At this later period Goethe's more mature works came into general popularity: others date their publication from this time. The best of these are now admitted to be the most finished specimens of poetic art and harmonious diction in our language. He is pre-eminently master of the genial powers and ease which are characteristic of the second generation. In one point, however, his example might, possibly, prove misleading, namely —the application of his muse to the passing hour, even in his riper productions, with an exquisite art such as few

other poets have cared to bestow on very modern subjects. Yet this facilitates our criticism, by enabling us to compare his artistic execution of modern themes with the poetic elements of his older performances. How inferior is *Eugenie* to *Egmont*, when the two are contrasted as poetic representations of civil commotions and state-revolutions among the people and in the cabinets of princes! Or if it be allowed to contrast works differing in external structure though of similar import, let a comparison be instituted between the *Elective Affinities* and *Tasso*, as regards a delineation of the passions, unfolded amid circumstances of a high social position. Again, let *Tasso* be considered as a delineation of the artist in his opposition to the external world—(as *Faust* embodies the internal conflict of the ideal mind)—and compared with *Wilhelm Meister*, how great the superiority of the latter composition both in richness of thought and artistic style! Poetically speaking, I believe the production just named, *Faust*, *Iphigenia*, *Egmont*, *Tasso*,* will serve to perpetuate the memory of Goethe to the latest times: as also his admirable lays, all equally excellent. We willingly follow the aged magician, whether his verse sounds from the east or from the west, drawn irresistibly into his enchanted circle: whilst his prosaic thoughts only disclose the painful spectacle of a great mind involved in a struggle whence he cannot victoriously emerge.

A doubt has been entertained by some whether Goethe's native genius was really adapted to dramatic poesy: and the repose of his picturesque delineation did not rather fit him for epic poems, as evinced even in such productions as *Egmont*, especially destined for the stage. But his attempts in this branch of composition, approximating closely to the epic, do not favour this view. It almost appears as though he could neither hit upon a fitting theme for epic composition, nor on a form satisfactory to himself. His feelings at all times prompted him to select the romantic rather than the heroic: the former, in its most comprehensive sense, blending fancy and wit with feeling and speculation, aroused by the passing occurrences of life, and moulded by the rich endowments of the intellect, seems to have constituted the legitimate sphere of his activity in diversified gradation and admixture.

* Translations of all these works of Goethe are contained in Bohn's edition of his works.

His influence upon the age was twofold, and such also appeals to us his nature. In reference to art, he has justly been considered by many the Shakspeare of our times: I say *our times*, leaning as they do to ideal fulness and manifold culture more than to artistic perfection in any one poetic direction: hence this perfection is not to be expected of our bard in equal degree with that of the earlier dramatic master. In reference to thought, however, as it refers to life, and determines the actions of life, our poet might also be styled the Voltaire of Germany. Thoroughly German in all things, chiefly in this, that his poetic wantonness and irony are more poetical, good-natured, honest, and earnest, than in the case of Voltaire, when giving expression to his indifference and unbelief, and when jesting with his own feelings. Yet all the varied culture, the spirited irony, the teeming wit of Goethe, cannot conceal the fact that his intellect, prodigal of thought, wanted some fixed and sure centre.

The alienation of poetry from the stage was continually being manifested in Germany ever since the time of Klopstock: Goethe himself producing many dramas without the slightest reference to their scenic adaptation, and without any view to the destination they subsequently attained.

So in the case of Schiller's *Don Carlos:* after he had resisted all the seductive influences of universal applause, with which his early ruder productions were greeted, he found it difficult to produce equal success by the more dignified exercise of his art. But though a certain discrepancy still obtains between his poetry and the requirements of our stage, he must nevertheless be regarded as its true founder. He gave it its proper sphere and its most happy form. The poetic form of our loftier drama has been not a little influenced by the masterly translation of Shakspeare and Calderon, executed in finished poetic diction and manifold elegance of verse, by A. W. Schlegel: indeed the nobler efforts of poetry generally have gained a new standard of artistic criticism in this model of genuine style. Schiller was altogether a dramatic poet: even his passionate rhetoric, an important adjunct to his muse, is an essential and characteristic element. His historical, as well as his philosophical, works and attempts are to be considered merely

subsidiary to his dramatic studies. Yet his philosophical efforts are remarkable in so far as they chiefly represent his inmost thoughts and exhibit his want of mental harmony. Doubting, sceptical, unsatisfied views, gleam out from beneath those efforts to satisfy the cravings of an inquiring mind. He remained always at the threshold of doubt, hence, even in his noblest, most animated productions, we are chilled by the breath of an internal coldness.

There are some who fancy his philosophic pursuits were injurious to himself and to his art. But, before he entered upon these, his intellect was already entangled in scepticism; and it must be conceded that the internal satisfaction of a mind like his was of far more importance than all external art-culture. But even for artistic purposes, Schiller's great historical and philosophic preparations are rather commendable than otherwise in reference to some of his dramas. Our stage will reap no laurels from the extensive or the rapid labours of voluminous scenic poets. Dramatic excellence, as in Greece, England, and Spain, is only attainable by means of profound thought and historical selection. If, in certain works, composed towards the middle period of his career, Schiller is not exempt from the heterodox application of philosophic ideas respecting the nature of ancient tragedy, or from historical bias, the defects are not attributable to speculative tendencies so much as to a comparatively superficial acquaintance with these branches, a shortcoming of valuable results, despite his earnestness and intended depth of research. In a much greater degree than Schiller, Werner introduced all the mysteries of feeling and faith, all the paradoxes of terrible destiny, and an equally terrible psychological conflict into his dramatic world-pictures: blending animation with grandeur and profundity in themes felicitously selected, such as *Attila* or the *Mother of the Maccabees*. These works are excluded from the stage, to which they are peculiarly applicable, only by the over-flowing copiousness of their contents. This poet's earlier efforts reveal his inner struggle to press forward amid the throng of life to a higher intellectual calling.

In a similarly earnest manner to that of Schiller, and in noble artistic emulation of his still greater contemporary, the leading tragic bard of Germany, our Austrian Heinrich

Collin, sought to perfect himself more and more in tragedy. For this species of composition he was eminently fitted by his fiery enthusiastic patriotism, pervading all his dramas so thoroughly as to render them truly national and patriotic, even when the subject is antique or at least foreign. The more recent tragic poets, who have written for the stage with successful, and, for a time, with splendid results, have nearly all relapsed into the heathen doctrine of necessity, and have vied with each other in delineations of horrible catastrophes. Intimately connected with these are those inflated caricatures of false grandeur introduced by Schiller's earlier efforts, and associated, even in his maturer productions, with finished representations of real dignity of character. From so mistaken a path, however great the talents employed, little permanent advantage can be anticipated. The poems of Theodor Körner, his lyrics even more than his imperfect dramas, breathe a youthful freshness of life affecting our sensibilities the more that it was early quenched by death.

But I feel I am approaching the limits of my undertaking. The variety of subjects now crowding around me in the living present is too vast, the picture of my own times is too full of a multiplicity of imagery, to admit of being treated historically, and briefly epitomized as the past. Let others, in an account of the characteristics of the times, record my own exertions in the field of philosophy during thirty years, or my joint labours with my brother, A. W. Schlegel, in the domains of poetry, art, criticism, general literature, and philology. In the course of these lectures it has been impossible for me to expatiate on many individual writers and works, in themselves sufficiently important but disturbing my plan as a whole, of which the main features were to take a survey of collective literature. If it were proposed to examine each distinct province into which the vast extent of German literature may be divided, according to the nature of its several contents, or even the foremost ones—to state what has hitherto been achieved in philosophy and religion, in history, poesy, criticism, or scenic composition, and what has been left undone,—each province would demand separate and detailed treatment.

So much of the present as is connected with the past may

be historically comprehended. Not so that which is still in progress of formation, in external or internal conflict as yet undecided: the future would in that case be anticipated by hasty judgment, as happiness and indistinct phenomena would often be so characterized as to mislead public opinion and baffle the development of talents and mental faculties.

I clearly perceive the dawn of a new generation of intellect, and doubtless the nineteenth century will shed a lustre over our literature brighter than that of the preceding age. But the spirit and direction of this youthful progeny is not yet sufficiently developed to warrant our pronouncing upon its character. Much will be required at its hands, for it has inherited much. In regard to the collective whole of German literature, I do not for a moment doubt of its yet realizing the sanguine expectations it has hitherto promised without being able fully to answer them. I also perceive many disturbing causes. In art and poetry the false spirit of the antique, the mechanical imitation of ancient art and expression, are disappearing. On the other hand, there is an exaggerated imitation of predecessors, without any genuine views of the right course, and without individual power: there is an idle pretence, a frivolous jesting with the profounder secrets of reason and imagination, which previous masters handled in a very different tone, consciously or unconsciously making them subservient to struggling intellect in the process of development. In philosophy, too, the great majority have appropriated only the vapid system of world-construction and the dynamic play of varied ever-shifting theories of nature suggested by Schelling. Few will be disposed to take a very deep interest in the new undecided development and changed direction of the mind inwardly. They will continue to be satisfied with the external rind and form: so long as the old structure of a previous system remains entire they will not have the slightest notion of the possibility of its being animated by a new spirit.

Others remarking the great division in German philosophy and literature thought that their appearance as mediators between contending systems would both remedy the evil and establish a position for themselves. Merely to reject and ignore conflicting extremes by mediation of this sort cannot produce a positive or new state of things: it can scarcely ensure lasting terms of peace.

But perhaps the period is no longer remote when the question of development will not be that of individual writers so much as of the entire nation: when writers will no longer have to create a public, but the nation will cultivate its own authors according to its peculiar mental exigencies and aspirations. In this direction, likewise, the first footsteps of progress are sufficiently apparent. As German literature has visibly improved since the middle of the eighteenth century, if not in the number of artistically perfect productions, at all times rare, yet in comprehensive extension, prolific ideas, and internal energy: so also, considerable advance has been effected in the influences of literature and their general appreciation. Out of the little band of scattered dilettanti and patrons of national art and language with which the literature of that era began, a public has been gradually formed. At first they were mere spectators of sectarian contests: but their ranks continued to extend, the interest they took became even livelier; so that now, even in reference to literature, it is hardly a paradox to talk of German nationality, its genius and character, its aspirations and its wants.

The spirit of sectarianism, however deeply rooted in Germany, has evidently decreased of late. Of those sects that have exercised the greatest amount of influence in this country during the second half of the last century, and have, accordingly, gained for themselves a name in history, the Illuminati seemingly recede into the background on the accession of a profounder philosophy: the followers of Kant soon grew as tired of their lifeless formulas as the world had long been: whilst natural philosophers attained to that great and happy variety which all but emancipated them from the restrictive fetters of sectarianism. I would not be understood to say that the old leaven of false enlightenment is altogether cast out. The formulas of Kant, likewise, have occasionally endeavoured to gain a surreptitious hold in a novel disguise, but they never struck deep root. In part this remark is applicable to the inferior class of natural philosophers whose want of union, and whose disunion and aberrations, significantly prove that the right course has not yet been generally entered. They likewise teach us that in the domains of the inner world and of thought, the circling planets of human systems and science still hesitate to render

the necessary implicit obedience, and to take their prescribed course around the sun of truth.

Upon the whole, sectarianism has latterly grown milder: at least, it has thrown off its narrow scholastic trammels into the real world; it has prepared itself to enter on the national struggle of German intellect. Not to make this acknowledgment were unfair.

But down to the most recent time the distinguishing characteristic of our literature, as of our nation, is that of a state of conflict: how often soever individuals and parties, the principle contested and the arena of contention, may shift and change.

It will scarcely be necessary to recall the conflicting circumstances under which our modern literature appeared since its first epoch: the offspring, as it were, of contest. The conflict first lay between the Swiss, who exclusively admired the English and ancient schools of poetry and criticism, and the Saxons, whose culture was moulded entirely after French tastes: then between the serious and playful poets, the followers of Klopstock or of Wieland: on another field, in nearer affinity to philosophy, was fought the battle of the so-called Orthodox party and the sect of Illuminati, a battle which enlisted the sympathies of the German public in behalf of one or other of the parties. The contest assumed a more important character during the Kantian period of philosophy, when the respective advocates of Ideal and of Empiric doctrine, in its extended signification, divided the empire of intellect. Both parties were, in a certain sense, victorious: Empiric doctrine having maintained her rights not only in public influence on the multitude, nor in history and art alone, but also in natural philosophy and science. Whilst, if the Ideal system be, in a general sense, held to be that which is directed to the Ideal, and proceeding from ideas, soars far above all sensuous experience, this ideal view of things, in all branches of art and science, has become so prevalent that scarcely any one can now venture to gainsay its influence: however much these several views may differ among themselves and each other according to the proposed Ideal. One of the chief causes contributing to the termination of this memorable contest was the circumstance that the Idealists, or those who contended for the superiority of ideas

over empiricism, became disunited: its more eminent advocates feeling that they had no longer to combat generalities, but a real power, a spirit acting incessantly for evil, a genius of wickedness. The incomparably greater struggle that might have been expected to issue in the political and intellectual world generally, has not yet appeared in full array. In the narrower confines of exoteric science, the contest between Idealism and Empiricism took a new turn since the ever-widening discoveries of psychology have induced complete recognition of spiritualism, by means of astounding facts that distance mere ideal conjecture. Thus the conflict between ideas and reality has ceased to possess an interest for scientific men, and will in future have to find a fresh theme or assume a new form. In the exoteric domains of general literature, the old contest between existing conditions and novel demands, the given and the required, eventually shrank into humble proportions, degenerating into a mere sham-fight. Of this sort is the imaginary opposition between a Golden Age and a so-called New School. As I have previously observed, German literature has no proper Golden Age: neither can I as yet observe anything that deserves to be called a New School. The term actually represents the exaggerations of a few imitators enthralled by ideas not their own, whose aberrations are unjustly fastened upon the originators of these same ideas in order to ridicule them the more readily. But of a school, in the acceptation of the word as urged in reference to the Greek philosophers or the Italian painters, and designating the permanent establishment of definite principles of art or science, and their recognition by successive generations, few traces can be found within the sphere of German intellect: moreover, the number of those disciples who could ever hope to become masters is very limited. It must be borne in mind, too, that almost every eminent scholar now shapes his own course, and individualism becomes more and more prevalent.

Equally futile was the dispute that occurred some time since between North-German and South-German literature and genius, arousing the most hateful passions of all the old provincial dislikes and fancies. But the interests involved in the mental struggle of Germany were more momentous than

a mere temporary dispute among the respective leaders of two fashionable cliques.

If we consider this memorable contest in its entire influence on the eighteenth century generally, not in Germany alone, but throughout England, France, and the rest of Europe, and try to ascertain the significant connection of this phenomenon with universal history, we shall find the solution somewhat as follows:—The question at issue was not confined to the locality of its immediate appearance: it was raised by a great internal agitation of the human intellect generally.

The unbridled licentiousness of reason and thought, and the revival of the Imagination which had been so long oppressed by pseudo-science and stagnant life-formulas, constitute at once the moving causes and the portentous results of these manifold commotions. In France, despotic and disorganizing Reason, repudiating faith and love, displayed her destructive effects outwardly, and rendered national life a terrible example to present and future ages. Whilst in Germany, in keeping with the national character, absolute Reason, externally moderate in the application of her noblest energies, turned the channel of her activity inwards; instead of exciting revolutions she created and destroyed only metaphysical systems. Traces of the second phenomenon of the age, namely, the reawakening of dormant Imagination which, having been all but extinct and forgotten in a super-rational world, was as it were rediscovered—are found scattered over other countries also in the revival of olden legend and romantic poetry, apparently without external inducements. But in equal degree, and corresponding extent, fancy was nowhere else aroused in so manifold and varied a compass of development; such a phenomenon has never occurred in any other nation.

Of all German philosophers, Fichte furnishes the clearest evidence of the delusive and destructive workings of absolute Reason, free from all restraint in the exercise of her internal agency, in a powerful masculine intellect. Not only on account of his masterly invention in all faculties of thought, so peculiarly and eminently his own, but also since he proposed to derive from himself alone all the materials of thought, despising nature and undervaluing his predecessors.

But of the poets who mainly assisted in the regeneration of German Imagination, not one is equally meritorious with Tieck: he possesses the master-key that unlocks her deepest recesses, and is initiated in all her wonders and mysteries.

The century has reached this its utmost limit as regards reason and fancy: it has proceeded no further on the whole. Let us not forget that to halt is to relapse, and that, having inherited so great a profundity of reason, which we have explored, and so bright a splendour of reawakened Imagination, we must add firmness of will and purpose, which contains the beginning and end of all good, and is alone able to save us from degeneracy: next, by clear perception, and correct views, for whose complete establishment and harmonious culture profound reason and a rich imagination are but separate elements, which of themselves can never lead to desirable results. Knowledge is, in all things, based on a survey of the whole, and on the discernment of what is right.

It has been my object in the course of these lectures, to point to this connexion of parts to the whole of literature at every opportunity, and to convey a true idea of the collective products of the intellect. As in my former efforts, so in the present, I have desired to assist in arriving at a complete and discriminating knowledge of good and evil, in literature too, without the aid of oratorical arts.

A fresh contest has sprung up with a new epoch; the great moral changes that have taken place of late years set the intellectual character of the age in a new light, and materially serve to define its form. The intrusion of the political differences of other countries on our literature, may not at first sight seem to be any direct accession. For some years past we have been deluged by a flood of liberal ephemeral productions, pamphlets, and tracts of every description, covering every spot like an army of locusts, and leaving scarcely any room for sterling works of a serious nature. If under these circumstances, only a Goerres has been able to command attention and make his voice heard above the hum of buzzing insects all around, his name must stand, in the stead of many more, as that of a worthy champion of German character and merit. The evil was a temporary one: it

were a much more serious injury if the defenders of the good cause, of lawful justice and Christian truth had, during the continuance of the contest, been led away by exaggerated passion, and adapted to the ultra-tone of foreign writers. This tone is, once for all, not suited to the German genius, and only calculated to damage good impressions by bitter hostility of sentiment or expression. Every difference of opinion in Germany, be it philosophical or political, sooner or later reopens the old wounds of our religious feud that has now existed for three centuries. But who is there that does not feel the propriety of delicate treatment as regards the inner religious feeling of individuals as a matter of conscience and something sacred, which must be treated with the greatest forbearance? This moderation, so far from necessarily arguing lukewarmness, is rather referable to conscientiousness, and may be combined with the greatest decision: this will be evident to all, and influence those most who have attained to a clear and certain belief of the Truth. Let us leave then, all ultraism in religion and politics to foreign nations: even the hatred of Christianity, so revolting a characteristic of the lowest section of the liberal party—here and there even in Germany—cannot be overcome by hatred in return, the only effects of which would be to cast a stigma on the purity of Christian truth and righteousness. In reference to political periodicals, which we could not well refrain from mentioning, it should be borne in mind that this peculiar direction of intellectual and literary activity, though new to the spirit and, in the long run, scarcely congenial to the taste of Germany, was not without advantageous results to our more recent national history: suggesting many historical compositions of distinguished excellence, and laying the foundation of German patriotic union worthy of the cause and of the country. The conviction is now tolerably common to well-disposed members of all parties, and has assumed something like definite certainty in the eyes of the majority, that the sheet-anchor in the turbulent sea of conflicting opinions and interests, is to be found in positive principles: whereby alone a chaotic state of things can be restored to harmonious organic order. It were idle to look for this sheet-anchor, for the purposes of daily life, politics, or science, in a mere earthly positive, of whatever

sort, unless blended with a Divine positive, the upholding connecting vitality to the entire system. And where else are we to inquire after this Divine Principle but in the quarter long vouchsafed to us: in religion, divine revelation, and in Christian philosophy, as the correct copy of these in a scientific form for universal practical application? All that consciously or unconsciously tends to this aim, co-operating therewith in design and spirit from whatever source, is good, commendable, and salutary. Eminent Protestants have recently acknowledged and vindicated the divine origin of the Bible and the Divinity of Christ in a peculiar and somewhat novel way; this is only an additional testimony to the truth and an earnest of its triumph. Of course, the whole question of a Divine positive, and the conviction that it, namely Christianity, exclusively affords the materials of intellectual and moral peace, brings us back to the old rupture in German faith. But as the evil originated here, so here it must be remedied. The fondly desired yet vainly sought reconciliation of our creed cannot, indeed, be attained by the ordinary means of human mediation: this is to be effected neither by mutual well-meant concessions nor by diplomatic treaty: it is altogether beyond the reach of human toil, and must emanate from God who, in due time, will fill with the power of his Holy Spirit his chosen instruments. As far as human means are concerned, we can only contribute to the accomplishment of the divine design, by throwing off that lukewarmness and half-heartedness which so frequently prevents us from taking the decisive step in a recognition of the truth. Many are the features, too significant to escape observation, announcing the near approach of that great period of reconciliation, which we dare no longer conceal. This, too, is the proper place for its mention, inasmuch as we have been engaged in pursuing intellectual life through the several stages of its development in all time. For, in reality, what more is wanting to the German mind than to rescue from chaotic dispersion and to concentrate all its active fermenting energies, and thus to found a truly German school, the comprehensive essence of all intellectual culture. And where could the necessary element, harmony, be more surely found than in that sublime religious peace?

I have been desirous, throughout, not to take exclusively

critical, philological, or artistic views of literature and philosophy. It has, rather, been my design to trace the whole of intellectual life through its development and progress among the foremost nations of antiquity, and of modern Europe in successive ages. Thus to produce an historically adequate impression of the vast empire of intellect, comprising the loftier culture of man, or all knowledge, representation, investigation, and art, which language—written or spoken—is instrumental in conveying. This empire of intellect, in its position of counterpart to Church and State, and in its manifold relations to both, is comprehended in the term *scholastic*, often met with in these pages.

In order that the whole results, as affecting the present epoch may be more clearly understood, let us, in conclusion, cast another glance over the entire series of our representations. There are, especially, four bonds serving to unite the family of mankind and direct their movements: corresponding with the diversified nature of the motive power of each subordinate sphere; a four-fold manner or form obtains in every human association. To begin with the lowest step, there is first, the power of money and commerce, extending through all states, and scattered over the whole of the civilized world: bringing its remotest parts into manifold contact, and often exercising important effects on intellectual culture. This species of connection, in its widest sense and in reference to universal history, is styled the *Guild*. With this we are but little concerned on the present occasion. The next and mightiest of all is the power of the sword or the State; but the Sword of Justice is not to wage war as its final purpose, but to maintain peace at home and abroad: which is unattainable unless genuine moral and intellectual peace be based on religion, sound principle, and genuine mental culture. The third of these four great powers is that of Divine grace, with which every priestly office and ecclesiastical communion generally are connected: it is by these means that inner peace is secured, and external peace receives its highest sanction. To what purpose would collective material life serve, whose just privileges the State guarantees, and which is so richly adorned by the culture of the arts, trade, and commerce, if it were not the basis of a higher intellectual existence? But this intellectual exist-

ence, an inheritance common to humanity, is more immediately fostered by the agency of religion and of the Church, whose exalted function it is to reunite nations long severed by interests of state-policy, and to link together all the family of mankind in loving brotherhood. Intellectual life is, likewise, perpetuated by scholastic learning, and propagated from one age to another; and this fourth bond of union stands in manifold and intimate relations with the Church and the State. There have been ages wherein all human art and knowledge were one with divine; but in others particularly during the last three centuries, scholastic learning has appeared in marked separation from the Church, and then the State undertakes to control its energies. But if the State neglect or pervert this responsibility, like any other free institution, learning becomes dependent on public patronage and prevalent tastes, and is on that very account liable to the influences of private advantage or some species of pecuniary interest securing its outward existence. I have, previously had frequent occasion to mention the varied effects of these threefold dependencies of learning, more particularly the injurious results of the last named, I need not now, therefore, dwell upon them. In this invisible empire of thought and intellectual union, bearing sway through all ages, and whose sceptre is transmitted in regular succession, the power of speech, man's distinguished characteristic, appears in manifold phases of poetry and knowledge. Inquiry into the history of universal mental culture has almost everywhere shewn that art, history, science, are but so many developments, illustrations, or figurative applications of the imperishable Word of Divine revelation. If we contemplate the tree of collective art, knowledge, and scientific tradition, with its branches, through all ages and tongues, through all gradations of mental culture and of religion, we find that we can trace its ramifications, more especially to ten nations. Our eye is first captivated by the verdant meads and flowery fields of Greek legend and art, the conspicuous beginning of all mental culture. But in exploring its hidden sources, we are carried further back into oriental regions, where the stupendous monuments of Hindostan, the gigantic ruins and primeval crags of which stand forth as the relics of a former

world, meet our wondering gaze. On the firmest rock of this primordial world, Moses laid the foundations of the temple of Hebrew prophecy, the glory of which irradiated the olden poetic and sacred tradition of Persia with a kindred refulgence, as far as it can be discerned amid the impure admixtures of Arab creed. Both elements of mental culture, as well the Greek as the Oriental, after passing through the earnest Roman world, flow into Christian ages, in which a new living stem of noble intellect, grafted on the old northern stock, has shot forth with great vigour and effect among the four most cultivated nations of the West—the Italians, the French, the Spaniards, and the English—in poetry and criticism, in arts of every kind, and in philosophy both true and false. But the German mind forms the connecting bond of this intellectual development of the four great Romanic nations; inasmuch as it has been the common root of the whole phase of the new Christian Life, and the cause and mainstay of the great intellectual burst throughout Europe; indeed, it may be considered the key-stone of the arch. Germany, though once the arena of dissent, now sheds the light of religion over other countries. The spiritual culture of those four nations rests on what we have already more than once characterised as the four elementary powers of common objective perception; accordingly, we see in the Italians, imagination and a love of art; in the French, reason and oratory; in the English, keen perception and historic powers; and in the Spaniards, intense nationality and poetical feeling. But the German mind explores the more profound hidden springs of the inner life, where those elementary forces no longer appear disunited, but the entire power of living consciousness, both in thought and act, proceeds from one common root. Even here, not very long since, those heights and depths of reason and imagination, with a consideration of which we closed our present inquiries, were in a state of severed isolation. But the great turning point is already distinctly visible in the regions of psychology, at which both of these elements will blend without losing any of their vital force, and whence a permanent and historical spiritualism will embrace all the spheres of intellectual life. This new direction of the mind in a recognition of the Invisible, will be more important in its results

than the discovery, three centuries ago, of a quarter of the globe, or a true physical system, or of any other momentous subject. The intellectual problem of the age, to be worked out according to the bent of the German mind, is a complete recognition of the eternal Word, valid for all time and reflected throughout the entirety of temporal science and art: this idea being in close affinity with the reunion and reconciliation of faith as well as of knowledge before mentioned. This reunion of knowledge, which we cannot as yet designate by any other term than that of Christian philosophy, is not to be contrived after the fashion of a system or a sect, but must grow as a living tree from the root of revelation acknowledged as Divine. Universal history and mythology, the empire of language and of physics, poetry and art, are but scattered rays of this one luminary of the highest knowledge. When this Luminary bursts forth in the glory of meridian splendour, the glimmering torch of Pantheism will recede into the shade, before the awful presence of regained Truth and a Divine positive. Then, too, reflecting inquirers of every kind will more correctly estimate the real progress of the times, thoroughly distinct from that which the world calls the spirit of the age. Distinguished faculties will no longer continue in a state of dreamy existence, where they have slumbered for years, or start up from chimerical reveries as though they had been unconscious of the lapse of one or two generations. The domains of high art, likewise, may be expected to be invigorated by a new breath of life: the false phantasmagoria of distorted tragedy giving place to the exalted poetry of truth, which, instead of describing, with limited play of imagination, the legend of any single age or race, shall hymn the story of eternal love, and the mysteries of the soul veiled in the allegories of a world of spirits. Upon the whole, that Luminary's rays are not to be confined to individual regions of mental culture; endowments and talents the most varied will have to contribute to the regeneration and growth, to the complete development of the tree of life. Just as the glory of the Creator is promoted throughout the vast realms of creation by the several graduated agencies of nature; respectively ministering and co-operating, disporting in childish glee, seeking and loving, or illumining; so in the little

world of man, created after the image of the whole, the same four-fold degree of inferior and superior natures is clearly visible in its spiritual centre, the department of intellectual life and action. Hence we have never omitted in our inquiries to pourtray, in a spirit of historic truth, insignificant matters, side by side with more important ones, whenever they tended to promote the development and completeness of the whole. This conception of the several gradations of intellectual nature may, at the same time, suggest a standard whereby each individual topic, lowly or exalted, good or evil, discussed in the course of these investigations, may be correctly estimated in reference to its intrinsic worth.

INDEX.

Abelard, characteristics of, 168.
Abraham, 97.
Achilles, the grave of, 19; contrasted with Ulysses, 19, 20; his resemblance to Tancred and Richard, 184.
Adam, 93.
Addison, his tragedies, 314.
Adelung, 354.
Æneid, character of the, 72.
Æschylus, distinguished as a warrior, 23; character of his genius, 25, 34; contrasted with Sophocles and Aristophanes, 34; his profound feeling, 269.
Æsculapius, votive offering by Socrates to, 46.
Afrasiab, contest of Feridun with, 183.
Agamemnon, dynasty of, 18.
Ages, the golden, silver, and brazen, 36.
Akbar, the Emperor, 121.
Albertus Magnus, 234.
Alemanni, memorials of the, 169, 170.
Alexander, his reign and conquests, 17, 52, 75; endeavours to extirpate the Magi, 92; his invasion of India, 113, 124; mentioned in Indian records, 121; his exploits a theme for poetry, 184.
Alexandria, the seat of literature, 23, 52.
Alexandrines, irregular, use of, 62.
Alfieri, productions of, 368.
Alfred, an early patron of literature, 139, 167; descended from Odin, 149.
Allegory, one of the principal forms of Biblical representation, 101, 103; Christian, 270.
Alphabet, the Greek, derived from the Phœnicians, 12; the Indian, 122; the Runic, 151.
Amadis, the, 246.
Amali, the, 147, 148.
America, its discovery, 214; its conquest, 215.
Aminta, a Pastoral, by Tasso, 253.
Amshaspands, the seven invisible powers in the Persian mythology, 91.
Anaxagoras, doctrines of, 41.
Ancients, philosophy of the, 41.
Andronicus, his translation of the Odyssey, 57.

Anglo-Saxon language and literature, 168.
Anselmus, his erudition, 168.
Anthemius, a distinguished architect, 146.
Antiquity, the study of, 245
Antonines, the, 79.
Antoninus Pius, 80, 137.
Aphorism, one form of Biblical representation, 101; its use in Sanscrit Literature, 119.
Apollonius, the Argonauts of, 52.
Arabian poetry, 181.
Arabs, 3; their old songs, 19; poetry and tales of the, 180, 181; pillaged Alexandria, 162; introduced the study of the mathematics, astrology, and alchemy into Europe, 230; their factions in Spain, 247.
Archimedes, skill of, 56.
Architecture, Indian, ancient monuments of, 107; old German mediæval, 146; style of, 190.
Argonauts, expedition of the, 36, 52.
Ariosto, his obligations to Boiardo, 205, 214; estimation held in by Charles the Fifth, 248.
Aristippus, doctrines of, 69.
Aristophanes, character of his writings, 31; a great poet, 32; his histories, *ib.*; his exuberance of wit and poetic boldness, 33; apology for his poetic licence, 34; his capacity as a patriot, *ib.*; grave charge against him, 35.
Aristotle, the representative of Philosophy as a science, 48, 82; refined elegance of his writings, 49; his immense mental influence, *ib.* 59; his scientific severity, 79; spirit of his system, 84; the great master of empiric philosophy, 85; multitude of his followers, 86; compared with Plato, 87, 238; only one manuscript of his work preserved, 163; influence of his philosophy in the Middle Ages, 231; Spain and Germany accept his tenets, 239; his conception of the nature of Tragedy, 284.
Arrian, compared with Xenophon, 80.
Art and Poetry, asylum for, 245.
Arthur and the Round Table, 178, 188.
Asciburgum, tradition respecting, 150.
Asen, the, 154.
Asia, Central, the cradle of human civilization, 89.
Asia Minor, conquests of Cyrus in, 18.
Astrology, belief in, 234.
Atellan plays, 64.
Athalie, by Racine, 284, 285, 295.
Atharvan Ved, the fourth Veda, 127.
Atheism, fallacy of the theory of, 307.

Athenian freedom, 60.
Athens, the centre of Grecian culture, 17; its freedom, 60.
Atticus, lost tragedies of, 64.
Attila, the warrior-king of Hungary, 147, 187, 224.
Augustus, the happy sway of, 64, 71, 74, 78.
Aurelius, the Emperor, 80.
Authors, squabbles of, 5.
Ayeen-Akbery, the, 121.

Babel, its historical importance, 97.
Babenberg, the House of, 187.
Bacon, Lord, the father of modern physics, 286; his views respecting Nature, 288, 289, 300, 334.
Bacchus, festivals dedicated to, 33.
Bagavadam, one of the eighteen Puranas, 120.
Balder, death of, 155.
Ballads, ancient Spanish ones, 194, 196; old English and North European, 220.
Barbarians, endowed with a vigorous comprehension, 8.
Barbarossa, 167, 186: enfeoffed Count Berengar, 193.
Basedow, views of, 370.
Basil, 136.
Bayle, scepticism of, 335.
Bela, King of Hungary, 223.
Bencerrajas, The, an Arabian tribe in Spain, 247.
Berkeley, Bishop, his religious belief, 321.
Bhagavatgita, an Indian Poem, translated by Wilkins, 122, 127.
Bible, spirit of the, 100; its structure, 140; its translation into Latin, 142, 144; Gothic translation of it by Ulphilas, 147; its simplicity, 199; its literary influence, *ib.*; its typical and symbolic element, 200; German version of it, 339; its divine origin, 392.
Bird, the widowed one, 119.
Boccacio, fictions of, 193; his attempts to combine the heathen mythology with Christianity, 197; his fondness for allegory, 204.
Bodmer, a German poet, 350.
Bœhmen, Jacob, the Teutonic philosopher, Charles I. of England, one of his followers, 241; characteristics of his philosophy, *ib.* 242, 343; his vigorous style, 344.
Bohemia, its literature under Charles IV, 222.
Boiardo, obligations of Ariosto to, 205.
Boileau, his defects as a critic, 283, 284.
Bonald, his Christian philosophy, 326; errors of, 328.
Bonnet, zeal of, 304.
Boscan, a Spanish poet, 248.
Bossuet, eloquence of, 294; his superiority as a writer and orator, 296, 313; grandeur of his style, *ib.*

Brachmans and Samaneans, two Indian sects, 113—124.
Brahma, 38, 90, 114.
Brandenburg, the Ducal House of, 346.
Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne, 164.
Bruno, Giordano, 240.
Brutus, 61, 65.
Bucolics, or Pastoral poetry, 54.
Buddha, the religion of, 123.
Buffon, 303; compared with Rousseau, 312.
Bürger, the German poet, 360.
Burgundy, 186.
Burke, Edmund, his political sagacity and experience, 329; on the French Revolution, 392.
Byron, character of his poetry, 315.
Byzantine Empire, 165.

Cæsar, works of, 60; his lucid brevity, 70; his promotion of literature, 77; his attention to the Latin tongue, 347.
Cain, and his curse-marked race, 96.
Calderon, the great Spanish poet, 264, 265; the most Christian of dramatic poets, 267; his characteristics, 268, 270; compared with Shakspere, 271, 276.
Calidas, the flowery verse of, 118.
Callimachus, a poetic mythologist, 52.
Calvin, genius of, 291.
Camillus, his liberation of Rome from the Gauls, 62.
Camoens, 207; his Lusiad, 251; compared to Tasso and Ariosto, 254.
Capila, the Sankhya doctrine attributed to, 125.
Carey (W.) his translation of the Ramayan, 109.
Carthaginians, their literature, 57.
Castille, the Province of, 246; the poetry of, 247.
Castillejo, 172.
Catholic Countries, the poetry of, 246.
Cato, the elder, a foe to Greek Arts, 56; his study of history, 77.
Cervantes, his surpassing genius, 257; his prose works, *ib.* 258; his imitators, 311.
Chapelain, his Maid of Orleans, 281.
Charlemagne, songs collected by his orders, 148; his promotion of the Greek language, 164; alluded to, 139, 147, 177, 222, 230, 235.
Charles IV. King of Bohemia, 222.
Charles of Viane, 246.
Chateaubriand, romances of, 311; his work on Christianity, 324.
Chaucer, his talents and attainments, 193, 273.
Chinese, their polity and manners, 90; extolled by Voltaire, 305.

Chosru, 183.
Chriemhild, 187.
Christianity, its contests with heathenism, 81, 134; its relation to social life, 128; compared with Hindooism, 129—131; its dissemination in India, 133; its progress, 134; its influence on European Nations, 139, 143; changes produced by its introduction, 145; viewed in relation to the fine arts, 146; compared with the religion of the Persians, 183; mysteries of, 201; its influence on poetry, *ib.* 267: its relation to mediæval philosophy and mysticism, 233; its first teachers men of the people, 240; blended with poetry, 267; mythological interpretation of it by the French infidels, 307.
Chronicles, Monkish, 167.
Chrysostom, 136.
Cicero, the works of, 60, 63; dignity of his orations, 68; his pursuits and studies, 69; unequal in form and diction, 70; public scientific teaching promoted by, 77, 163.
Cid, poem of the, 194; abounds in comic passages, 195; the only great Spanish Epic, 251, 255, 284, 354, 363.
Claudius, works of, 370.
Colebrooke, his translations from the Sanskrit, 120, 121.
Columbus, 214.
Collin, Heinrich, the Austrian poet, 384.
Comedy, its original function, 33.
Commines, Memoirs of, 279.
Compass, discovery of the, 209, 214.
Confucius, 90.
Conscience, the voice of, 130.
Consonants, pure, 105.
Constantine, the Emperor, reign of, 134.
Conventual System, the, 166.
Coriolanus, the history of, 61, 65.
Corneille, his poem of the Cid, 194, 255, 282, 283, 284, 295, 354, 363; alluded to, 251.
Corvin, Matthias, a warlike Hungarian King, 224.
Coxe, the historian, 318.
Creasy, Professor, his Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World, 224.
Critias, 45.
Crœsus, 18.
Cromwell, Oliver, 229.
Crusades, the, 175; their influence on Literature, 180, 209.
Curiatii, the, 61.
Cyrus, 18, 47.

Dæmon, of Socrates, 45.
Danish Literature, 221.
Dante, 189; the masterpiece of, 197; a great poet, 198; characteristics of his poetry, 202; attached to the Ghibelline party, 203; compard with Petrarch and Boccacio, 204: a national

writer, 249; graphic force of, 266; a truly Christian poet, 268, 343.
Darius, 18.
David, 94.
Dead, Egyptian treatment of the, 109; custom of burning the, 110; and of embalming, *ib.*
Deity, allegorical representations of the, 38.
Democritus, 42.
Demosthenes, influence of, 17.
Denis, a learned Jesuit, 356.
Denmark, progress of literature in, 221.
Descartes, system of, 291; his discrimination between spirit and matter, 292; his proof of the existence of God, 293; his followers, 294; alluded to, 334—338.
Dessatix, or prophetic books of the ancient Persians, 107.
Diderot, his fanatical hatred of Christianity, 307, 311, 363.
Diocletian, 134.
Don Carlos, by Schiller, 382.
Don Quixote, one of the best productions of the epic muse, 257, 258.
Dorians, 23, 24.
Drama, true business of the, 265; its legitimate objects, 270; the French, 310; the Italian, 316.
Dramatic Art, 50; remarks on its nature and design, 265.
Dschemschid, 92, 182.
Dürer, Albrecht, 228.
Dutch, their progress in literature, 344.

Eclectic Schools, 49.
Eclogues of Virgil, 72.
Edda, the, or Icelandic poems, 107, 154, 220, 349.
Eginhard, 167.
Egyptians, a sacerdotal people, 13; their monuments, 90; their architecture, 108; their practice of embalming, 110.
Eleusinian mysteries, 25.
Empedocles, 48.
English language, cultivation of the, 3, 171; poetry, 273-278.
Ennius, tendency of his poems, 63, 64; school of Roman poetry introduced by, 77.
Enoch, 93.
Epics, legendary, of different nations, 73; Indian, 108.
Epicurus, 49, 66; on the pursuit of pleasure, 69; philosophy of, 238.
Ercilla, his epic of the *Araucana*, 250.
Eschenbach, Wolfram von, compared with Dante, 189.
Esther, book of, 98.
Ethiopians, 110.
Etruscans, their sacerdotal institutions, 13.
Euclid, the great geometrician, 56.
Eumenides, the, 266.
Euripides, an orator and

poet, 28, 34, 49, 50; compositions of, 50.
Europe, modern, survey of its languages, 171.
Eve, beguiled by the serpent, 96.
Evil, its origin on earth, 96.

Fairy Queen, by Spenser, 273.
Faith of English philosophers, 322.
Fanaticism, a tendency to, 80.
Faust, 266.
Fenelon, beautiful style of, 294.
Ferdinand, surnamed the Catholic, 246, 247, 248.
Feridun, 182.
Fichte, 369, 374, 380; his system of ideal reason, 378, 389.
Fielding, an imitator of Cervantes, 311.
Firdusi, 118; his Persian Epics, 180.
Flemming, a Silesian poet, 345.
Florence, its democratic spirit, 206.
Fo, worship of, 123.
Fox, compared with Hume, 318.
Franciad, the, 281.
France, decline of poetry in, 192; the lighter literature of, 308.
Frederick I. of Germany, writers in the time of, 354.
Frederick the Great, 224; neglect of German literature during his reign, 347; exculpation of, *ib.*
French, their historical memoirs, 194, 279; character, 212, 310; literature, 278; classic period of poetry, 280; tragedy, remarks on, 282; supposed to be copied from the Greeks, 283; its form, *ib.*; philosophy, 306; its return to the Platonic christian philosophy, 326.
Froude's history of England, 229.

Gama, the circumnavigator, 251.
Garcilaso, a Spanish poet, 248; his merits, 250.
Garve, style of, 366.
Gautama-Buddha, the reformer of the old Bramah worship, 124; the Nyaya-doctrine attributed to, 126.
Gay-Savoir, a kind of poetry, 171-172.
Gelon, the tyrant of Syracuse, 91.
Genesis, the wonderful book of, 96.
Genius, in the uneducated, 240.
Georgics of Virgil, 72.
German bardic songs, 148.
German language, its innate riches, 2; its perfection and finish in the Nibelungen-lied, 157; its reconstruction, 169; fusion of dialects in the, 170; its revival under Frederick I.,

186; its degeneracy, 208; contrasted with the French, 212; difficult of acquisition, 218; its copiousness and adaptation to philosophy, 219; rich in popular lays and poems, 342; fundamental law of its pronunciation, 352.
German literature, modern, 356, 357—359; the first founders of, 360; its subsequent progress, *ib.*
German love-songs, 173-174.
German versification, 352; its real essence, 353.
Germany, the Civil Wars of, 66; remains of paganism in, 153; appreciation of Shakspere in, 276, 363.
Gervinus, his Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century, 211.
Gessner, the German poet, his popularity, 350.
Ghibellines, their intolerant severity, 203.
Gibbon, his style, 318.
Gita Govinda, a Sanscrit Eclogue, 120.
Giudici, Signor, his history of Italian literature, 206.
Gleim, a German poet, 346.
Gnomic Bards, 101.
God, knowledge of, 94; a firm belief in, advocated, 213; proof of his existence, 293; faithful obedience to his will inculcated, 341.
Godfrey of Bouillon, 180.
Gods, notions of the, 37.
Goethe, genius of, 360, 361; popularity of his works, 380; influence of his writings, 382.
Goetz Von Berlichingen, with the iron hand, 362.
Golden Age, so called, of German literature, 354.
Goldoni, his portraiture of life, 316.
Goldsmith, his *Vicar of Wakefield*, 312.
Gongora, 264.
Gothic Architecture, 146, 189, 190, 191.
Gothic poetry, 147.
Goths, their extinction, 148; accusation against the, 164; their career in Italy, 165.
Gottsched, poems of, 354.
Gozzi, his extravaganzas, 316.
Greece, literature of, 11, 17, 21, 55, 60; the philosophers of, 240.
Greek language, the common medium of the civilized world, 56; its cultivation, 164; Roman translations from the, 77.
Greek Philosophy, the spirit of, 81.
Greek poetry, development of 22, 52.
Greek Tumuli, 19.
Greek writers, distinguished from the Romans, 59.
Greeks, wars of the, 15; degeneracy in their manners, 32; their genius for philosophy, 41; their inventive spirit, 56; their commerce

with India, 111, 113; their Erotic poets, 162.
Grotius, Hugo, persecution of, 229; his beneficial doctrine, 289; salutary influence of his writings, 291.
Guarini, the Italian poet, 255, 256.
Guilt, consciousness of, 130.
Gunpowder, its use discovered, 214; considered a perilous and hurtful contrivance, *ib.*
Gymnosophists, or Indian Recluses, 128.

Hadrian, mental cultivation in the time of, 78; period of literature from, to Justinian, 135.
Hagedorn, a German poet, 346.
Haller, a German poet, 346,
Hamann, J. G. his religious bias, 356; particulars respecting, *ib.*, 366, 367.
Hamlet, 275.
Harald Harfagr, 154.
Hardenberg, or Novalis, writings of, 379.
Harris, 316.
Harun al Raschid, 166.
Hebrew language, its character, 104, 105.
Hebrew Scriptures, 98, 100.
Hebrews, their faith and manners, 88; their pre-eminence, 93; their sacred writings, *ib.* their vicissitudes, 94; poetry of the, 102.
Helvetius, the doctrines of, 306, 310.
Hemsterhuys, his Socratic Dialogues, 326.
Henry of Ofterdingen, 187.
Henry VIII. of England, his policy vindicated, 229.
Heraclitus, 41.
Hercules, 36, 39, 195.
Herder, romances translated by, 195, 364; writings of, 361; distinctive features of his genius, 364.
Hermann, the deeds of, 147, 148.
Hermanni, by Klopstock, 349.
Hero-book, 188.
Herodian, 80.
Herodotus, 23; called the father of history, 26; his great work, *ib.* surveys the Egyptian monuments, 90.
Hertha, secret worship of, 152.
Hesiod, republican spirit of his works, 22, 36, 38.
Hesiod, the poems of, 36; the Theogony attributed to, 37.
Hieroglyphics, 103.
High-German, origin of, 169.
Hindoos, their sacred books, 114; their descriptive poetry, 115; benefits derived by from the British Government, 116; immolation of their widows, *ib.*; origin of their versification, 119; translations of their sacred books by Jones, Wilkins and

Colebrooke, 120; their philosophy, 122-128; points of resemblance between their conceptions and those of the Christians, 131, 132.
Hindoostan, religion and philosophy of, 128.
History, its deterioration, 75.
Hitopadesa, the Indian fable-book, 120.
Hobbes, 298, 332.
Hoffmanswaldau, spurious taste introduced by, 345.
Holbein, 228.
Home, 316.
Homer, extensive influence of his genius, 9; characteristics of his poems, 17, 19, 36; compared with Indian, Persian and Old German poetry, 21; also with Hesiod and the other Greek epic poets, 22; his Mythology, 37, 38; his representation of the Gods, 39; high merits of, 260; the masterpiece of nature, 362.
Horace, heroic grandeur of his poems, 71; appeals to our sympathies, 74, 143.
Horatii, 61, 65.
Hoshenk, 92.
Hume's History of England, 302; remarks on, 317, 318; his philosophy, 321.
Hungarians, their poetry and traditions, 223, 224.
Hurd, 316.
Huss, persecution of, 229.

Icelandic poetry, 220.
Idylls, of the ancients, 54.
Iliad and Odyssey compared with Ossian, 21.
Illuminati, a religious sect, 386.
Imagination, an enlightened one, 243.
Immortality, personal ideas of, 42.
Incarnation, Indian doctrine of the, 129.
India, its mythology, 38, 107; architecture, *ib.*; commerce of the Greeks and Romans with, 112; degradation of the people of, *ib.*; Alexander's invasion of, 113; British sway in, 116; resemblance between its moral philosophy and that of Christianity, 130; connections of, with Persia, 132; dissemination of Christianity in, 133.
Indian alphabet, 122.
Indian Monuments and Epics, 107.
Indian versification, 119.
Indians, their idea of a Deity, 38.
Inspiration, the soul of song, 51.
Ionic, rhapsodists, 22.
Ionic school of philosophy, 41.
Iphigenia, 64.
Iran, 182.
Isabella and Ferdinand, reign of, 247.
Isaiah, 94.
Isocrates, example of, 47.
Italy, its literature, 197;

poetry of, 56, 206, 248; pictorial achievements of, 206; its philosophy, 229.

Jacobi, writings of, 324, 361, 378, 380.
Jansenists, sect of the, 297.
Janus, 38.
Jerome, 145.
Jerusalem Delivered, by Tasso, 253.
Job, the sufferings of, 93; the Book of, 99.
John of Salisbury, 168.
Joinville, Sieur de, 194.
Jones, Sir William, 114, 120, 122, 329.
Jornandes, the Latin historian, 148.
Joseph the II., Emperor of Germany, 371.
Julian, the Emperor, 81, 134; his attempts to subvert Christianity, 135.
Jung-Stilling, 370.
Jupiter and Juno, 39.
Justinian, 134-136.
Juvenal's Satires, 74.

Kaiomer, 92.
Kalidas, 118.
Kant, the German philosopher, 324, 347, 356, 357, 360, 366, 367, 368; influence of his philosophy, 376, 386; on the province of reason, 377; his sceptical views, 378; errors of, *ib.*; formulas of, 386.
Kisfalud, a Hungarian poet, 224.
Kleist, a German poet, 346.
Klopstock, 199, 202, 261; new era of literature founded by, 339, 343, 347; his *Messiah* the commencement of a new Literature in Germany, 348, 351, 355, 387; his dramatic poem of Hermanni, 349; his versification, 351; the leading author of his time, 354; genius of, 356; errors of, 357, 358, 360, 361; high standard of, 362, 371; alluded to, 372, 382, 387.
Knights of St. John, 190.
Knowledge, supernatural, sources of, 84.
Körner, Theodore, his lyrics, 384.
Kranach, Lucas, 228.
Krishna, 12.
Kronegk, a German poet, 346.
Kronos, 38.

Labruyere, characters of, 309.
Lafontaine, his grace of style, 308.
Lamartine, his poetical compositions, 313.
Lamennais, his views of Christianity, 324.
Language, a great and glorious gift, 6; grammatical forms of, 106.
Language, English, its cultivation, 3.
Language, German, beauties of the, 2.
Language, Latin, the Bible translated into the, 142; its decline, 144; the *lingua rustica*, 145, 160; injurious

use of it after it became a dead language, 208.
Launcelot, 179.
Laura, a real personage, 204; her portrait, by Memmi, *ib.*
Lavater, writings of, 361; his views on physiognomy, 366.
Learning, the threefold dependencies on, 394.
Leibnitz, Philosophy of, 332-335; his *Theodicee*, 336; his *System der Theologie*, 337; his notions respecting Space and Time, 338, 367.
Leila, 183.
Leo X. 207.
Leopold the Glorious, 187.
Lessing, 242, 283, 337, 347, productions of, 355, 356, 357, 358, 360; spirit of his criticism, 363; his investigation of truth, 365, 366; philosophy of, 367; his *Education of Humanity*, and *Freemason's Dialogues*, *ib.*; a critical investigator, 368; his influence throughout Protestant Germany, 369.
Leucippus, 42.
Libraries, consumed by fire, 162.
Life, the enigma of, 85.
Literature, the influence of, 1; its importance to the well-being and dignity of nations, 6; mediæval, 139; three periods of, 135; viewed as an organ of tradition, 160; of the northern and eastern nations of Europe, 216; a national one advocated, 225; influence of the Reformation on, 227.
Literature, French, rich in historical memoirs, 278, 279; important feature in, 325.
Literature, German, 218; the so-called Golden Age of, 354; its prospects, 385; its characteristics, 387, 391; its present state, 392.
Literature, Grecian, 11, 12.
Literature, Italian, 197, 218.
Literature, Roman, peculiar grandeur of 11, 71; during the Middle Ages, 160; injurious results of its adoption, 161; classical period of, 78.
Literature, Scandinavian, 219.
Literature, Spanish, excellence of, 217.
Livy, 61, 74.
Locke, 86; compared with Bacon and Berkeley, 320; philosophy of, 299, 300, 335.
Lohenstein, 345.
Longinus, 88.
Lope de Vega, 262; his dramatic works, 263.
Louis the XIV., 302; writers in the time of, 303, 308, 344.
Louis the XVth, 80.
Love-songs, German, 173.
Lucan, characteristic of his poems, 75, 144.
Lucian, his witty picture of his times, 80.
Lucretia, 61.

Lucretius, his work on the nature of things, 66; a glorious painter of Nature, 67, 68.
Luther, Martin, antagonistic to Aristotle, 239; his revision of the Bible, 339; his revolutionary eloquence, 340; his mental superiority to his associates, 341, 368.

Macbeth, 266.
Macchiavelli, his high merits as an historian, 211; his patriotism, *ib.*; contrast drawn by, between French and German character, 212; his startling peculiarity, *ib.*; alluded to, 249, 289, 301, 332.
Madrid, the drama at, 261.
Mahabharat, an Indian epic. 109.
Mahometans, their persecution of the Hindoos, 116.
Maid of Orleans, by Chapelain, 281.
Maistre, Count de, 324, 328.
Malabar, dissemination of Christianity along the coast of, 133.
Malebranche, a defender of revelation, 294.
Man, his destiny and origin, 84; history of, 89, 319.
Marco Polo, called Messer Millione, 176.
Marius, 256.
Marmontel, his memoirs and tales, 312.
Marot, 279, 342.
Mars, 150.
Marshman, Joshua, translator of the Ramayan, 109.
Mathematics, progress of, in the seventeenth century, 210
Maximilian, the Emperor, 185, 208, 229.
Maya, 96, 125.
Mediæval literature, 139, 160.
Mediæval philosophy, 233.
Mediæval poetry, 177, 179.
Medici, the, 205.
Melancthon, the friend of Aristotle, 239.
Melchisedec, 97.
Memmi, his portrait of Laura, 204.
Memoirs, French, 194.
Menander, his depiction of Athenian life, 50, 52.
Menu, the legislative code of, 114, 122, 127.
Mercury, 150.
Messia, the Margravate of, 354.
Messiah, by Klopstock, 348. 351, 354.
Metastasio, performances of, 316.
Metempsychosis, the Indian doctrine of, 111, 112.
Middle Ages, 158; their chivalrous poetry, 177-179; Architecture of the, 190; Allegory in the, 198; unjust depreciation of them, 167, 244.
Milan Cathedral, 190.
Milton, 21; his Paradise Lost, 257; disadvantages under which he laboured, 273; compared with Shakspere

and Spenser, *ib.* 275, 277, 278; and with Bœhmen, 343.
Mimansa, his system of Indian philosophy, 126.
Minnegesang, or love-poetry, 171, 172.
Minnelieder, 188, 193.
Minstrelsy, the old German, 185.
Mithridates, 150.
Moliere, his comic humour, 308, 309.
Montaigne, 279.
Montesquieu, his genius, 303.
Moorish Architecture, 190.
Mosaic records, 88, 90.
Moses, 88, 89; brevity of his information, 93; his laws, 97; his temple of Hindoo prophecy, 395.
Müller, Johannes, writings of, 361, 373.
Mystics, 233.
Mythology, originators of, 36; its materialism, 37; defence of, 40; the northern, 154.

Nastiks, or Nihilists, an Indian sect, 126.
Naples, changes in the government of, 206.
Nature, the manifestations of, 67.
Neo-Platonic Philosophy, 81, 134.
Nero, 75.
Nerva, 76.
Nestorius, 133.
New Testament, its literary influence, 139; its form and style, 141.
Newton, his great discoveries, 300.
Nibelungen-lied, the, 148, 157, 177, 220; question as to its authorship, 187; its high merits as a poem, 188.
Nicholas of Cusa, the great mathematician, 234.
Niebuhr, his Roman History, 61.
Nikolai, 370.
Noah, 93.
Normans, their language and sentiments, 175.
Northern Mythology, 132, 182.
Novalis, 379.
Nyaya, a doctrine attributed to Gautama, 126.

Oberon, poem of, 350.
Odin, 148, legends respecting him, 149; more than one, 150; worship of, *ib.*; his mythology, 153; his Walhalla, 154; commemorated in the Icelandic Edda, *ib.*; his visit to the nether world, 155.
Odoacer, 148.
Odyssey, the, 21.
Old Testament, 95; its principal elements, 96; its character and spirit, 98, 100; its peculiarities of language and form, 101-104.
Opitz, a Silesian poet, 344, compared with Flemming, 345.

Oratory, a principal object of education, 55.
Orestes, 266.
Origen, the early Christian philosopher, 134.
Orpheus, a name of some import to the historian, 36.
Ossian, 19; his poems, 155, 181; his plaintive melancholy, 314.
Ottfrid, a Christian bard, 126.
Otto von Freisingen, 167.
Oupnekat, 121.
Ovid, the writings of, 40, 53; his Metamorphoses, *ib.*

Pacuvius, 64.
Painters, Italian, 207; German, 228.
Pantomime, 64.
Paper, discovery of its use, 214, 215.
Parable, 101, 103.
Paradise Lost, by Milton, 257.
Paradise Regained, 278.
Parallelism, 101, 102.
Parmenides, 48.
Parsees, 48; their sacred writings, 106.
Pascal, a celebrated French writer, 297; his *Provincial Letters*, 298.
Pastor Fido, an Arcadian drama, 255.
Paterculus, 75.
Pelasgians, 14.
Peloponnesian War, 15.
Pelops, 18.
Percy, English Ballads collected by, 314.
Perpetual edict, or Roman code of laws, 78.
Persepolis, ruins of the city of, 108.
Persian poetry, 182.
Persian religion, its poetic element, 107.
Persians, their wars with the Greeks, 15, 22, 23; compared with the Hebrews, 91; their creed, *ib.*; their connection with India, 132.
Persius, 75.
Petrarch, love-sonnets of, 161; perfection of his muse, 203; alluded to, 172, 173, 197, 203, 204, 249.
Philadelphus, reign of, 88.
Philosophers, German, 235.
Philosophy, of the ancients, 41; its restoration by Socrates, 49; cultivation of, in conjunction with rhetoric, 79; the new Platonic, 81; influence of the eastern, 134; progress of, 230; mediæval, 233; remarks on, previous and subsequent to the Reformation, 236; system of, in the seventeenth century, 286.
Philosophy, English, remarks on, 322.
Philosophy, French, 324.
Philosophy, German, observations on, 331.
Phœdra, by Racine, 295.
Phœnicians, their connection with the Baltic, 152.
Physicians, denounced as impostors, 56.

Physics, progress of, in the seventeenth century, 210.
Pindar, reputation of, 23; value of his works, *ib.*; his great characteristic, 24; compared with Æschylus, 24, 25, 59.
Pisistratus and Pisistratidæ, 18, 19.
Pius Antoninus, 80.
Plato, his Phœdo and Republic, 48; his philosophic teaching, *ib.*; compared with Aristotle, 49, 86, 87; his intellectual superiority, 60; tenets of, 69; regards Philosophy as an art, 82; refutes the Sophists, *ib.*; his contemplation of Divinity, 83; efforts of his disciples, 84; leaning towards his system, 236.
Plautus, 64.
Pleasure, on the pursuit of, 69.
Pliny, the elder, his forced style, 75.
Pliny, the younger, his panegyric on Trajan, 78.
Plotinus, 137.
Plutarch, on the style of, 79, 80.
Poet and the Artist, 4.
Poetry, primitive, destination of, 51; elements of, *ib.*
Poetry of the Greeks, 52; its tendency, 53; pastoral, 54; the business of, 66; its relation to nature, 67; of the Hebrews, 102; German, 148, 156, 187, 189, 342, 344, 348, 350; influence of the Oriental in Europe, 180; Persian, 183; chivalrous, 185; French, 192, 281, 308; Spanish, 194, 243, 264; Early Italian, 197, 205; of Catholic Countries, 246; the proper materials for, 259; legitimate themes of, 260; English, 273, 314; of the Silesian school, 345.
Polier, a distinguished Orientalist, 121.
Polybius, his great work, 57.
Pompey, 74, 50.
Pope, his translation of Homer, 314; his poems, *ib.*
Porphyry, 137.
Porsena, 61.
Porus, 121.
Prabodh Chandrodaya, an Indian philosophical comedy, 127.
Prakriti, 125.
Printing, discovery of the art of, 215; of German origin, 219.
Prometheus, 64.
Propertius, the Roman Elegiac poet, 53.
Prophets, the Hebrew, 98.
Prose, its high pitch of elevation among the Romans, 74.
Protestantism, influence of, 230.
Provençal language, 171.
Psalms, the book of, 99; translated into Latin, 144.
Pulci, the first predecessor of Ariosto, 205.

Pultowa, battle of, 224.
Puranas, or mythologic legends, 122.
Puruschottama, 125.
Pythagoras, propagates the idea of a personal immortality, 42, 56, 109, 110, 112.
Pythagoreans, 32, 41, 81.

Quevedo, 264.
Quinctilian, 163.

Rabelais, 279.
Racine, the French poet, 279; the character of, 284; his *Athalie, ib.* 285; his *Phædra*, 295; his *Berenice*, *ib.*; attached to the opinions of the Jansenists, 297.
Rama, the popular Indian Epic of, 108, 119.
Raphael, paintings of, 207.
Reason, 84; the age of, 244.
Reformation, the, its influence on literature, 227; its effects on the Fine Arts, 228; and on philosophy, 243—245.
Regeneration, Indian notion of, 130.
Reimarus, his attack on revealed religion, 367.
Reineke Fuchs, story of, 192.
Retz, Cardinal, 301.
Reuchlin, the celebrated oriental scholar, 234.
Revaj, a Hungarian scholar, 223.
Revelation, recognition of, 380.
Richardson, his descriptive talent, 261; romances of, 311.
Richelieu, Academy established by, 279.
Rienzi, 206, 249.
Ritson, his old English ballads, 220.
Robertson, 302; his character as a historian, 317.
Roger, 120.
Roland, Norman war-song in honour of, 176.
Romance languages, the, 142.
Romance, modern, founded on the School of Cervantes, 258.
Romance of the Rose, 193.
Romans, their intellectual cultivation, 57; poetic genius of the, 61; their epics and fictions, *ib.*; dramatic poetry of the, 64; review of their principal writers, 65-76; their laws of the twelve Tables, 122.
Rome, Greek philosophers expelled from, 56; literature of, 58, 142; origin of her greatness, 62; its heroic age, 63; effect of gladiatorial exhibitions at, 65; purity of the language at, 145; encouragement of the arts in, 206.
Romeo, 275.
Romulus, 61.
Roncesvalles, battle of, 176.
Ronsard, the French poet, 280, 281; his Franchiad, *ib.*

Roscoe, his character as an historian, 318.
Roswitha, Latin poem of, 160.
Rousseau, his noxious influence over his nation and age, 304; followers of, 310; his Confessions, 312; his style, *ib.* 324.
Rudiger, the Margrave, 186.
Ruggiero, one of Ariosto's heroes, 251.
Runic Alphabet, 151; inscriptions, 152.
Russia, her advances in civilization, 222.
Ruth, book of, 98.

Sabines, wars of the Romans with the, 63.
Sachs, Hans, of Nürnberg, 342.
St. Anno, Bishop of Cologne, 157.
St. Augustin, moral treatise by, 138.
St. Graal, poems of, 179, 198.
St. Jerome, a Christian Latin author, 145.
St. Louis, 194; his deeds and fortunes, 281.
St. Martin, writings of, 326; spirit of his philosophy, 327, 328.
St. Pierre, Bernardin de, 311.
St. Sophia, Church of, 145, 164, 190.
Sakuntala, an Indian drama, 115; translated by Sir William Jones, 118.
Sallust, style of, 70.
Samaneans, meaning of the term, 114, 124.
Samnite War, the, 62.
Sandrocuttus, 121.
Sankhya-doctrine of philosophy, 127.
Sanskrit language, compared with the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, 105, 106, 117.
Santillana, 246.
Satire, Roman, 74.
Saturnine versification, 62.
Savages, admiration of, 305.
Saxon Emperors, progress of civilization under the, 167.
Saxons, their mode of abjuring Paganism, 149; of North Germany, 169.
Scandinavians, exercise of their influence on European poetry, 219; their literature, 220.
Scepticism and moral belief, 320.
Schaman, 114.
Schanameh, 118.
Schelling, his theories of Nature, 385.
Scherin, 183.
Scherriffschah, the most celebrated of Persian Poets, 118.
Schiller, his delineation of Wallenstein, 234; the poems of, *ib.*, 373, 374, 375; his Don Carlos, 382; the dramas of, 383.
Schlegel, A. W., his translation of Shakspere and Calderon, 382, 384.

Schlegel, Elias, a German poet, 346.
Schlegel, Frederick, his lectures on modern history, 208, 227.
Schloka, 101, 119.
Sclavonic races, literature of the, 222.
Scott, Sir Walter, character of his poetry, 315.
Scotus Erigena, 168.
Scriptures, interpretation of the, 116.
Sebastian, the youthful sovereign of Portugal, 252.
Sectarianism, in Germany, 386.
Seneca, the philosopher, 64, 75; his antithetic style, 144.
Sepoys, mutinous spirit among the, 104.
Septuagint, 88.
Sepulveda, a disciple of Aristotle, 231.
Seven chiefs, their conquest of Hungary, 223.
Sextus Empiricus, 80.
Shakspere, his historical plays, 66, 240; remark respecting, 265; compared with Calderon, 271; his faithful pictures of humanity, 272, 274; grand elements in his plays, 275; highly appreciated in Germany, 276, 363; aversion of the Puritans towards, 277; his profound reflectiveness, *ib.* veneration for, 314.
Shem, Ham, and Japhet, 89, 93.
Smollett, an imitator of Cervantes, 311.
Socrates, 28; reviled by Aristophanes, 35; his commendable exertions, *ib.*; inculcates the doctrine of a deity, 44; charge brought against him, *ib.*; his peculiar views, 45; his votive offering to Aesculapius, 46; alluded to, 191, 240.
Solomon, 94; the writings of, 99, 191.
Solon, operation of his genius, 10; his promotion of public education, 16; alluded to, 17, 18, 35, 40.
Songs, old heroic ones, 62.
Sophists and philosophers of Greece, 28, 35, 43, 44, 45.
Sophocles, exquisite beauty of his compositions, 27, 28, 34, 50, 59; splendid tragedy of, 267, 269.
Soul, doctrines concerning its immortality, 42.
Souls, transmigration of, 109, 112, 115, 134.
Space and Time, notions respecting, 338.
Spanish Literature, its advantages over that of other nations, 194; its ballads, 196; cultivation of its poetry by nobles and knights, 246; high national tone of its poetry, 249; systematic rules of the prose writers, 257; dramatic writings, 262; its gradual progress to the summit of genuine art,

264; not a model for other nations, 271.
Sparta, intellectual superiority in, 60.
Spenser, his *Fairy Queen*, 273.
Sphinx, the Theban, 155.
Spinoza, doctrines of, 333; errors of, 334; system of, 368.
Spirit and Soul, doctrine of, 125.
Stael, Madame de, 325.
Stark, writings of, 370.
Sterne, productions of, 312.
Stoics, 49.
Stollberg, the German poet, 360, 361; his dignified simplicity of style, 379.
Suicide, condemnation of, 46.
Sulzer, a philosopher of the olden school, 366.
Symbolism, of the Bible, 200; Christian, 267.
Syncretic Schools, 49.

Tacitus, genius of, 76, 150.
Tarentum, 56.
Tarquin, 61.
Tasso, 188, 207; Christian theme of his great epic, 252; his Pastoral of Aminta, 253; re-models his Jerusalem Delivered, *ib.*; his conceits, 254; reply of, 255.
Tauler, the philosopher, 235.
Terence, an imitator of Menander, 50, 64.
Thales, the founder of Grecian philosophy, 16, 41.
Theban brothers, the, 64.
Thebes, storming of, 36.
Theocritus, the Idylls of, 54.
Theodoric the Goth, 139, 145, 147.
Theophrastus, the character-painter, 49.
Theuerdank, poem of, 192.
Thibault, King of Navarre, 192.
Thibet, mode of disposing of the dead in, 110.
Thomson, his *Seasons*, 314.
Thousand and one Nights, 180—182.
Thucydides, 29; character of his history, 30, 31, 47.
Tieck, the German poet, 390.
Titus, the Emperor, 76.
Traditions, national, 9.
Tragedy, origin of, 50; themes for, 65; prevailing form of the ancient, 266.
Trajan, his high intellect, 76, 78; death of, *ib.*
Trees, held sacred, 153.
Trinity, Indian ideas of the, 129.
Tristram, a love-epic of the Middle Ages, 178, 179.
Trithemius, Bishop, 234.
Trojan leaders of the Middle Ages, 184.
Trojan War, the, 18.
Troubadour poetry, maturity of, 246.
Truth, its existence denied, 43.
Twice-born, an epithet applied to the Bramins, 130.

Ulphilas, the translator of

the Scriptures into the Gothic, 147.
Ulysses, 19, 20; visits Germany, 150; alluded to, 195.
Uneducated, mental power of the, 240.
Unity, immutable, without motive power, 43.
Upanishat, a commentary on the Vedas, 114.
Utz, a German poet, 346.

Valmiki, the Indian poet, 109; the reputed author of the Ramayan, 119.
Varro, a collector of valuable works, 77.
Vedanta doctrine, in India, the, 126, 127.
Vedas, the, 96, 114.
Vega, Lope de, 262; his dramatic compositions, 263; his vanity and ambition, 264.
Velleda, 147.
Venetians, their manners and arts, 206.
Vespasian, 76.
Vicar of Wakefield, 312.
Villena, 246.
Virgil, his love of nature, 72; his Eclogues and Georgics, *ib.*; his Æneid, 72; alluded to, 118.
Virtue, definition of, 85.
Voltaire, 280; his prefaces, 283; *Alzire*, his masterpiece, 285, 286; compared to Racine, 295; and Pascal, 298; introduces the philosophy of Locke and Newton into France, 300; his pernicious views of history, 301; his errors and prejudices, 302; his partiality for the Chinese, 305; his philosophy alluded to, 308—311; his *Candide*, *ib.*; his prose style, 312, 347, 363.
Von Eschenbach, Wolfram, his celebrity, 189.
Voss, the German poet, 360, 361.

Walhalla, Odin's, 153, 155.
Wallenstein, Schiller's delineation of, 234, 266.
Walpole, Horace, on Ossian's poems, 181.
Walpurgis night, 153.
Warton, 316.
Water and fire, reverence for, 41.
Weisskunig, poem of, 192.
Werner, his dramatic works, 383.
Widows, Indian, immolation of, 116.
Wieland, a German poet, 350; his poem of *Oberon*, *ib.*; his laudable endeavours, 353, 361; philosophic romances of, 366, 387.
Wilkins, the Sanskrit scholar, 120, 122.
Winckelmann, 347, 356, 357; his taste for the beautiful in art, 358, 363; philosophic tendency of his writings, 365.

Wolf, philosophy of, 339.
Woman, dignity of, 32.
Word of life, 142, 242.
Writers, ancient, preservation of their works, 163.
Wynelieder, or love-songs, 172.

Xenophanes, 27, 41.
Xenophon, contrasted with Thucydides and Plato, 47.
Xerxes, 18; expedition of, 23.

Ximena, Donna, 195.
York and Lancaster, feuds of, 193.
Young, his *Night Thoughts*, 314.
Ysdragill, the sacred Ash of the Icelandic Edda, 154.

Zegris, the, 247.
Zendavesta, 92, 107.
Zohak, 182.
Zoroaster, 92, 107; the followers of, 110, 124.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

BETHANY
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

809
Sch37 fY

63009